This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 2044 097 778 088

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTERS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.

VOLUME II.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTERS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

WITH

An Introductory Dialogue

ON

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

BY

WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY

In Lebensfluten, im Thatensturm,
Wall' ich auf und ab,
Wehe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.
Goethe.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON: CHAPMAN & HALL

LIMITED

1886

Digitized by Google

IX
L729c

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS,
BUNGAY,
and Bread Street Hill, London.

C. U.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET OF THE RENAISSANCE.

	PAGE
The greatness of Michael Angelo	1
Great men are the light of the world; through them the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of their age are most clearly discerned	3
Materials for obtaining a knowledge of Michael Angelo	3
Three periods in Michael Angelo's life	6
Michael Angelo's youth: the three influences brought to bear upon it	7
What his early productions tell us of the workings of his mind and the course of his thoughts	20
Michael Angelo's way of life in his youth	25
The chief incidents of Michael Angelo's manhood	27
What the works of his manhood reveal to us of him	31
His life austere, solitary, and laborious	39
Michael Angelo's old age. Victoria Colonna's friendship	41
The works of his old age and their significance	43
His Sonnets, and what they tell us of his philosophy	48
His death	58
The correctness of the statement that he is the Prophet or Seer of the Renaissance, depends entirely upon the sense in which "Renaissance" is used. It is a question-begging word	59
The notion that there was a rebirth of the human mind in the period between Columbus and Galileo is untenable	60
If the Renaissance be dated from the age of Dante, Roger Bacon, and Nicola Pisano, Michael Angelo may well be called its Prophet	61

Digitized by Google

PAGE

But of the Humanistic Renaissance he is the Prophet, only as Jonah was the prophet of Nineveh, or Lot of Sodom . . 62

CHAPTER VI.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Difficulty of properly estimating the eighteenth century . . 67

In this chapter it is regarded as the closing period of the Renaissance epoch 69

The Renaissance, whatever else it was or was not, was a rebirth of that ancient Paganism which in the political order is Absolutism and in the intellectual Materialism . . . 69

By the close of the sixteenth century, which marks the end of the first stage in the history of Renaissance ideas, Absolutism prevails in the greater part of Europe, and medieval philosophy has fallen into disrepute 70

The second period of the Renaissance epoch ends with the year 1688: a date of much importance, for it is the date of the first publication of Locke's famous *Essay*, whence we may learn what were to be the dominant philosophical ideas of the next century: and it indicates the high-water mark in the reign of Louis XIV., the type and personification of the Renaissance political idea 74

It is also the date of the rescue of the perishing liberties of England by William of Orange, and of the expulsion of the Renaissance idea of monarchy from this country . . 86

By the eighteenth century, in this chapter, must be understood the hundred years between the English and the French Revolutions 89

And the object of the chapter is to sketch, first the progress of the Renaissance political idea, next of its philosophical, in Continental Europe during those hundred years, and then to consider the contrast to the general course of European development, both in the public and in the intellectual order, presented by England 89

The Age is justly called *le Siècle Français:* the progress of other Continental countries was in lines parallel to that of France . 90

The political history of France from 1688 to 1788 is a history of the advance of Absolutism, and the French system was imitated throughout the Continent generally . . . 90

Digitized by Google

PAGE

These hundred years were a period of the deepest servitude and ignominy for the Catholic Church: the one power left in Continental Europe which still witnessed to the reign of law and the supremacy of conscience 96

The Society of Jesus was the last remaining bulwark of the Holy See, and its suppression in 1773 was an assertion by monarchical Absolutism of the unbridled power of that material force to which the Society, by its very constitution and rule, opposed an obstacle and a protest 97

The fifteen years between the suppression of the Jesuits and the French Revolution are the Carnival of Renaissance Cæsarism: and the most effective weapons of the autocratic powers were forged by the *philosophes*, whose direct political action was ever throughout Europe in support of despotism . . 112

The political history of the eighteenth century in Continental Europe is a history of the extinction of civil freedom and of its best guardian and guarantee, ecclesiastical liberty . . 121

But the eighteenth century is as emphatically *le Siècle Français* in the intellectual order as in the political: it may be called *the Age of the Philosophes* 121

The philosophical doctrines dominant throughout Europe a hundred years ago may all be traced from Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. It was not, however, directly from Locke, but from his French disciples, that Europe learnt them 122

Estimate of Locke formed by Mill, D'Alembert, and Voltaire. His method is purely physical 123

He is the initiator of the Materialistic movement in its ultimate phase which bolder and more logical minds worked out. The only difference between him and those of his disciples, whose teaching would have filled him with horror—such as Condillac and Cabanis—is that he less consistently expounds his own principles. The *philosophes* are all representatives of a way of thinking derived from him, either directly or indirectly . 126

The greatest names in the *philosophe* sect are those of Voltaire and Rousseau. Estimate of them. The substance of their teaching is negative 128

Causes of the victory achieved by the *philosophes* over the French intellect. The Cæsarism of Louis XIV. was as disastrous socially and religiously as it was politically . . . 137

The sect of which Voltaire was the chief was *felix opportunitate:* it enabled men to fit to their practice a theory of life . . 142

Digitized by Google

PAGE

Impotence of the French Clergy 144
The Renaissance philosophical idea issues in Atheism and Animalism 149
Meanwhile in England, in spite of blots upon our polity, civil and religious liberty steadily developed . . . 161
And the intellectual leaders of this country, as well as the general public, were on the side of Christianity . . . 177
More than that, the great religious movement initiated in 1726 by John Wesley breathed new life into English morality. . 186
Both in the political and in the spiritual order England stands apart from the rest of Europe. And this we owe mainly to the Revolution of 1688 and to William of Orange . . 191

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF '89.

The French Revolution is the great historical fact of the age in which we live 196
Its greatness lies in this, that it was not an alteration in the accidental arrangements, but in the very bases of civil society 199
The object proposed by the French Constituent Assembly was, by means of deduction from abstract principles, to reconstruct civil society upon the basis of pure reason . . . 200
Those principles are set forth in the Assembly's *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen* 201
The object of this chapter is to inquire into the value of those principles, of which the chief are the Sovereignty of the individual and the Social Contract 207
Is it true that freedom, equality, and virtue are the natural heritage of the individual? 212
It is not true. Nor is it true that civil society is the result of a contract between a multitude of unrelated human units . 215
Nor again are these serviceable fictions. They are falsehoods, presented as truths to serve as the basis for a total reconstruction of the public order, their practical effect being the effacement of the individual, the death of personal liberty, and the destruction of human progress 220
What Jacobin Fraternity really means 228

Digitized by Google

PAGE

The master error of the Constituent Assembly was in dealing with abstract principles at all 234

It is our happiness in England to have avoided the *à priori* method in politics 236

The great reforms effected in our institutions during the nineteenth century have been essentially a return to the spirit of medieval democracy 237

And a development of old and tried constitutional doctrines: not a derivation from abstract principles 238

A nation is not a fortuitous *congeries* of unrelated human atoms, but a real and organic entity 239

And as the various individuals and classes who compose it have their several functions, so has the social organism its proper function: "the end of the state is liberty" 240

The best form of the state at any period—there is no immutably best form—is that which best represents the nation for this end 240

The classes which make up the combination and subordination of civil life are the great bulwarks of liberty, because they are the great factors of individualization 241

To vest absolute power in any one class is to inflict a monstrous injury upon the rest, and upon the whole community . 241

To obtain such a representation of the nation, as shall be the nation in miniature, and shall truly present for the greatest advantage of the community all the constituent elements which make it what it is—such is the ever-recurring problem . 243

Reasons for disbelieving that the people of England will ever attempt to solve that problem upon the principles of '89 . 243

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AGE OF BALZAC.

The place of Honoré de Balzac in French literature . . 248

He is not only the greatest master of French romantic fiction, but the exponent of French life under the Empire, the Restoration, and the Monarchy of July. He claims to be not a mere teller of stories, but the historian of a civilization. And it is thus that he is considered in this chapter 255

Plan of his *Comédie Humaine* 260

Digitized by Google

PAGE

His *Père Goriot* the best introduction to it 263
His estimate of Parisian life 283
„ of Provincial life 288
„ of Country life 294
The picture which he presents is sombre and terrible. Is it true? 301
Reasons for believing that it is true. First, Balzac's own competence and honesty 302
Secondly, a consensus of the weightiest corroborative testimony . 307
Balzac aspired to do something more than paint the types and conditions of nineteenth century civilization, and to seize its latent meaning. He sought also to judge it 314
He finds society sick of egoism: the *moi-humain* the only thing left by the Revolution 315
The course of events since his death in 1850 has gone far to justify his political views 319
His religious views 320
The charge of immorality brought against the *Comédie Humaine* . 323
The *Comédie Humaine* faithfully reflects the chaos of philosophical opinions distracting the times in which it was written: in this, as in other respects, is the true expression of the society in which its author moved, and which found in him "its most original, most appropriate, and most penetrating historian" . 327

INDEX 329

Digitized by Google

CHAPTERS IN EUROPEAN HISTORY.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET OF THE RENAISSANCE.

THE name of Michael Angelo, if not the greatest in art—an unfruitful question which I gladly pass by—is assuredly the greatest among artists. For his greatness is not merely derivative, a reflection from statue and painting cherished among the choicest treasures of the human race. It was a remark of Victoria Colonna, "Those who admire Michael Angelo's works, admire but the smallest part of him;" the merely æsthetic spectator or technical critic misses their highest lessons. Supreme examples of the power of the arts of design to convey thought, they are fraught with teaching which such as can receive it will never tire of pondering: teaching which we apprehend but dimly and in rudiment at first, and learn more perfectly as the years pass away, and our inner eye is purged by the sad experience of life, and

Digitized by Google

our judgment matured by its stern discipline. They are revelations, as by broken words and half sentences, in the language of the gods,[1] of one of their own offspring—"the divine master," as his countrymen love to call him, who here, not less than in his verses, has left us fragments of his own life. It has been observed by Alfred de Musset:—

"Il n'y a pas d'art, il n'y a que des hommes. Appelez-vous art le métier de peintre, de poëté ou de musicien, en tant qu'il consiste à frotter de la toile ou du papier? Alors il y a un art, tant qu'il y a des gens qui frottent du papier et de la toile. Mais, si vous entendez par là ce qui préside au travail matériel, ce qui résulte de ce travail; si, en prononçant ce mot d'*art*, vous voulez donner un nom à cet être qui en a mille: inspiration, méditation, respect pour les règles, culte pour la beauté, rêverie et réalisation; si vous baptisez ainsi une idée abstraite quelconque, dans ce cas-là, ce que vous appelez art, c'est l'homme."[2]

A great truth is here worthily uttered in words of which I gladly avail myself as an introduction to what I am about to write. It is not my object to offer any criticism of a dilettante kind upon the works of Michael Angelo. I wish rather to endeavour to look at the man and his inner life through the memorials of himself which he has left us, in order to see what was really his position with regard to the important movement, vaguely termed the Renaissance. Great men are truly "the light of the world," as in other senses, so in this, that from them radiates the

[1] It is a remark of Sir Joshua Reynolds: "The style of Michael Angelo . . . may, poetically speaking, be called the language of the gods." See his *Fifteenth Discourse.*

[2] *Mélanges de Littérature et de Critique*, p. 2.

Digitized by Google

illumination in which the spiritual and intellectual characteristics of their age are most clearly discerned. History has been said to be "the essence of innumerable biographies." But from how few lives is anything to be learnt beyond one monotonous lesson? It is only through those gifted souls

> "whom a thirst
> Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
> Not with the crowd to be spent,
> Not without aim to go round
> In an eddy of purposeless dust,"

that any really philosophical study of history is possible.

With respect to the materials for obtaining a knowledge of Michael Angelo we may reckon ourselves well off. There are few great men of whom we possess so many and such authentic documents. It is true that of his statues and paintings not a few have perished or are lost, while some of his principal works which have come down to us are marred by the neglect and dishonour of centuries. But still, what remains to the world of his labours in the arts to which he dedicated his life is much, and of late years it has received valuable additions in the various drawings from his hands, which have been rescued from secret repositories and made accessible in Galleries and Museums. It is the good fortune of the world too, in the present generation, to possess for the first time the authentic text of his poems in Signor Guasti's admirable edition, of which I shall have to say more

Digitized by Google

hereafter. Then, again, much peculiarly interesting information has been opened to us, in the collection of his autograph letters, acquired a few years ago by the British Museum, and in the still larger collection bequeathed to the city of Florence, with many other very valuable relics of him, by his far-off kinsman, Cosimo Buonarroti. Mr. Heath Wilson, in his *Life and Works of Michelangelo*, has drawn largely upon these sources, and has thereby been able to throw much light upon many events in the Master's life hitherto partially or erroneously understood. He has given us, too, the results of his very careful inspection of Michael Angelo's greatest paintings, together with a number of plates and facsimiles of important documents, all of which are useful as helps and illustrations. Extremely valuable, however, as his book is, it contemplates Michael Angelo only from one point of view. It is "devoted to his history and thoughts as an artist."[1] And I imply no disparagement of the labours either of Mr. Wilson, or of his other biographers, from Condivi and Vasari to Grimm and Harford, when I say that Michael Angelo's life still remains to be written.

"The more I advanced in my researches for the biography of Michael Angelo," writes Herr Grimm, "the more numerous were the threads I discovered emanating from this one man on all sides, or which, proceeding from the men of his age, united in him. Not that his immediate influence was pre-eminent, but the connection of his progress with that which took place around him was evident. . . . . In truth they were one—he and the events he witnessed.

[1] P. 402.

Digitized by Google

The more elevated is the mind of a man, the more extensive is the circle which meets his eye; and whatever meets his eye becomes a part of his being; and thus the further I advanced, the more imperfect appeared my acquaintance with the things I was witnessing. For when I had at length grasped the idea of them on one side, it became evident to me, at the same time, upon how many others I had to view them, in order to obtain an impartial judgment."[1]

In these words Herr Grimm has set forth, if somewhat mistily, yet with substantial truth, what the ideal of the biography of a great man involves. Admirable, in many respects, as his work is, it must be confessed to fall very far short of that ideal. His greatest defect springs from his intense subjectivity. He colours his subject with the hues of his own time, looking at it through a haze of Teutonic transcendentalism. He signally fails to understand the popular Italian mind of the period with which he is concerned; a grave failing, for in education, feeling, habits, belief, Michael Angelo was essentially a man of that period; a citizen of sixteenth-century Florence, not a nineteenth-century professor or doctrinaire. Something of this seems to have crossed Herr Grimm's mind, indeed, for he owns, with creditable modesty and ingenuousness, "to write a life of Michael Angelo as it might be written, presupposes a life of study, knowledge, and experience, which the years I have attained to would not allow me to acquire." Study, knowledge, and experience are good, but it may be doubted whether, in amplest measure, they would have greatly improved his book. To form a veritable image in the

[1] Grimm's *Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. i. p. 69. (Eng. Tr.)

Digitized by Google

mind, of a man's life, and to represent it in words, demands, in addition to these endowments, a peculiar literary gift analogous to that of the portrait painter, of whom, as of the poet, "nascitur, non fit," is the true account.

It may be said of the several parts of Michael Angelo's life, as was said of his works by the friend who knew him best, that they "stand altogether, as if one." He is "whole in himself:" from first to last that unity which is a token of the highest natures is impressed upon his long career. Still there are three periods in it, which are in several respects distinctly marked off, and it may be well to take note of them, bearing in mind the essential identity of his character, his supreme individuality throughout. They correspond respectively to the seasons of youth, manhood, and old age, according to the ancient Roman reckoning yet current in Italy in his day. Born in 1474, his first five-and-twenty years were his period of discipleship in various schools and under very different masters. It is not, perhaps, until the year 1500 that he can be regarded as fully formed and his bent as taken. The next thirty years are the epoch of his matured powers. The world owes to them the works which are judged his greatest. For him those years were full of almost unintermittent trouble and suffering, of intolerable humiliations,

Digitized by Google

blighted hopes, ungathered harvests; much even of what it was permitted him to accomplish, thwarted and marred—

> "not answering the aim
> And that unbodied figure of the thought
> That gav't surmiséd shape."

In the ultimate scene of his life, which we may date from his sixtieth year, these "protractive trials of great Jove" are well-nigh over, and the "persistive constancy" which they have found has its reward. His last three decades in many respects realize that fine ideal of old age which Cicero has sketched in *Cato Major*. For this final period of recognized greatness and clear fame is built upon the foundations of virtue and piety laid in youth, and established in manhood. It is fruitful in noble activity and lofty thought; it is cheered by true and illustrious friendships, until in its fulness it is crowned by "the sweet wise death of old men honourable." Not until 1564 did the summons to depart come to him. He had then almost completed his eighty-ninth year.

It will be no slight help in a study of Michael Angelo if we can obtain some real apprehension of the scenes and influences among which his youth was passed and his character moulded. Happily abundant sources are open to us for forming a view of Florentine life at the period of which I speak. In the frescoes with which Ghirlandaio has covered the wall of Santa Maria Novella we have the outward semblance of the men and women of the time, and

Digitized by Google

even portraits of some of the most famous. Machiavelli is the exponent of the dominant political ideas of the age. Politian presents the highest point attained by its scholarship. Guicciardini is its exact and impartial historian. Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola unfold its fashionable philosophy. The sermons of Savonarola tell us of its moral and spiritual condition. The treasures of art and literature, which were before the eyes of men then, are for the most part before our eyes now. Of the crowd of chroniclers, versifiers, and pedants, from whose intrinsically worthless writings facts of interest are here and there to be gathered, the time would fail me to speak. Nor of the numerous works, differing very widely in knowledge and in literary skill, which have done so much of late years in every country of Europe to illustrate the condition of human society at this epoch, can I mention more than one. It is to a great English writer of fiction that we owe the book, so slight and unpretending in form, in which is to be found the best picture of the Florence of Michael Angelo's youth: a picture executed with an accuracy and completeness worthy of an exact scholar, and with an insight and delicacy and creative power which the poet-soul alone commands. The Florence of the closing fifteenth century, still free and encircled like a queen with her diadem of towers, still able to "ring her bells with the solemn hammer sound" — il dolce suono della libertà — that used to beat on the hearts of men; Florence, with her

Digitized by Google

grave, blacked-robed burghers, passionate alike in their love for their commune and in their party hatreds; Florence, the home of Christian art, and the treasury of recovered antiques; the last rallying-place of medieval Christianity, and the nursery of the New Learning, lives before us in the pages of *Romola*.

This was the Florence of Michael Angelo's early years. Little on which it is worth while to dwell has come down to us regarding his boyhood, beyond the fact that his indomitable force of character and passionate devotion to art asserted themselves very early. Condivi, the most authentic and authoritative of his biographers, tells us how books were to him "a dull and endless strife;" how he was very often marvellously beaten ("bene spesso stranamente battuto") because he would neglect his appointed tasks to handle a pencil or to wander about in the workshops of artists. He appears to have acquired little in Francesco da Urbino's school beyond the ability to read and write his own vernacular Tuscan. It is certain that he knew no other language. Even with Latin,[1] then the *lingua franca* of educated men,

[1] Direct and conclusive evidence of Michael Angelo's ignorance of Latin occurs in a conversation between him and certain of his acquaintances, in 1545, recorded by one of them, Donato Giannotti, and first published at Florence in 1859. Signor Guasti, in his introductory *Discorso*, gives a long extract from this very valuable document. (See pp. xxvi-xxxiv.) Giannotti, it may be observed, was upon terms of considerable intimacy with Michael Angelo, and used to help him by revising his verses. (See *Madrigale* lxxix., Guasti's edition; also *Madrigale* lxxxvii.) In the course of the conversation a certain Messer Francesco Priscianese is mentioned,

Digitized by Google

he never possessed any acquaintance beyond the knowledge of a few words and phrases, derived chiefly, no doubt, from attendance at the public offices of religion celebrated in that tongue. At last his father, Ludovico—described as a good, devout man, of the old school[1]—yielded to the inevitable, although not without many a pang, for the arts of painting and sculpture were not held in higher esteem then as callings in life[2] than is the art of music among ourselves at the present day.

who had published a Latin Primer in Italian. Michael Angelo says that the facility thus offered for learning Latin almost makes him wish to betake himself to the study of it. "Cato the Censor, a Roman citizen, learnt Greek, as I have heard, when he was eighty years old. Why should not Michelagnolo Buonarroti, citizen of Florence, learn Latin when he is seventy?" "Quasi mi fate venir voglia di studiare questo suo libro per imparare lettere latine. Io ho pur sentito dire, che Catone Censorino, cittadino romano, imparò lettere grece nell' lxxx anno della sua età. Sarebbe egli però così gran fatto che Michelagnolo Buonarroti, cittadino fiorentino, imparasse le latine nel settantesimo?"

There is in Gualandi's collection of *Lettere Artistiche*—it is No. 6—a letter in very bad Latin, purporting to be addressed by Michael Angelo to Francesco Fortunati, in 1504. Apart from all question as to the language, the tone and sentiments of this letter are, as it seems to me, absolutely conclusive against his authorship of it. At the same time I do not agree with Grimm (vol. i. p. 496), that the letter is not authentic, or that the request for money which it contains is fatal to it. I believe it to have been composed *for* Michael Angelo, either by a friend or a professional letter-writer, whose aid he thought fit to seek, according to a common custom, to supply his own ignorance of the polite tongue, in addressing a dignified ecclesiastic.

[1] "Uomo religioso e buono e piuttosto d' antichi costumi che nò." Condivi, *Vita di M. A. B.* c. iv.

[2] To Michael Angelo's father and uncle, Condivi says, "come

Digitized by Google

Michael Angelo had just attained the age of thirteen, when, in 1488, the decisive step was taken, and he was apprenticed "to Domenico and David Currado, commonly called Ghirlandaio." A better choice could not have been made. Domenico Ghirlandaio was reckoned among the first of Florentine artists then living. And justly. For his works, if not distinguished by profound originality or subtle and delicate feeling, are marked by accuracy of execution, dignity of manner, and exquisiteness of finish. Thoroughly versed in the science collected by his predecessors, he belonged to a school of eminent men who were no mere specialists, but artists in the widest sense of the word. Like Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Verocchio, and Donatello, Ghirlandaio regarded the whole field of the arts of design as his own, and passed from one department to another with the ease of the master, familiar not only with the practice but the principles of art, imbued with the knowledge and the feeling of form.

As a pupil of the Ghirlandaii, Michael Angelo came under influences which it is important to apprehend correctly. Mr. Symonds with reason regards Domenico

imperiti dell' eccellenza e nobilità dell' arte parea vergogna ch' ella fosse in lor casa." *Ibid.* c. v. It may be observed that this feeling did not arise, as Mr. Harford imagines (*Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. i. p. 7, 13), from any notion of the obligations of noble descent or of the consideration due to "the blood of the ancient counts of Canossa." Mr. Wilson has shown very clearly (p. 4) that this genealogy, although believed by Michael Angelo himself, on what he might justly regard as good authority, was not put forward before his time, and is untenable.

Digitized by Google

Ghirlandaio as summing up in himself the whole tradition of the Tuscan school. And the mighty works of that school were before the youthful Buonarroti, to illustrate the lessons taught him by Domenico, and doubtless to convey to his keen æsthetic perceptions profounder lessons than any that Domenico could teach him. We know how earnestly he used to study the frescoes of Masaccio in the Branacci Chapel, and that far greater work of Giotto's, so rich in depth of feeling and creative power, the Entombment in Santa Croce. We know, too, how reverently he would contemplate the saints and angels whom Fra Angelico seemed to have drawn down from heaven, how greatly he esteemed the incomparable gates of Ghiberti, and the all but animated types of that prophetic anticipation of himself—Donatello. These were the masters by whom his earliest studies were governed, men whose conception of their vocation was the highest and noblest. The dominant note of them all is the same. Whatever the personal shortcomings of some, the spirit in which they worked was religious. Art was not to them its own end. It reached forward to something beyond. They thought of it as an instrument to body forth the forms of things unknown, to manifest a deeper verity and a nobler beauty than external nature yields. Mr. Ruskin has tersely summed up the difference between them and those who came after them. These early masters, he says, "used their powers of painting to show the objects of

Digitized by Google

faith:" whereas the later schools "used the objects of faith that they might show their powers of painting."[1]

But the medieval Tuscan was not the only art school in which Michael Angelo studied. There were other artistic influences very powerful and attractive, and of a very different kind, under which he came at this period. It was the age of excavation, and nowhere were the relics of antiquity more eagerly collected and more highly prized than in Florence. In his fifteenth year Michael Angelo left Ghirlandaio's studio to become an inmate of the palace of Lorenzo de' Medici—that first and most magnificent of dilettantis—who had discerned the boy's genius, and was anxious to foster it. In "the Garden at St. Mark's,' which Lorenzo had "adorned with various ancient statues and figures," Michael Angelo found examples of technical perfection such as the modern world was powerless to offer, and he threw himself with all the intensity of his nature into the study of the antique. He continued in the Medici Palace until Lorenzo's death in 1492, "every day," Condivi tells us, "showing some fruits of his labours to the Magnifico," and associating with the "learned baskers in the same princely patronage," conspicuous among whom were Ficino and Landino, Pulci and Politian. It was here chiefly that Michael Angelo acquired whatever information he possessed regarding the philosophy and poetry of the ancients. All the evidence available to us goes to show that such information was very

[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. p. 108.

Digitized by Google

limited. Politian, we read in Condivi, used to tell him stories out of the classical mythology, and to propose them to him as subjects for his work; and this is, apparently, the sum of what Mr. Wilson calls his "study of literature" under that scholar. Of the Platonic doctrine, or rather of the neo-Platonic, to which Lorenzo was so devoted, Michael Angelo doubtless heard much. It was ever his wont to delight in the conversation of learned men, and this was the favourite topic of discussion in Lorenzo's circle. But there is nothing to show that he ever gave himself seriously to its study, and there is a very strong presumption to the contrary. Plato and Plotinus were inaccessible to him, whether in the original Greek or in Ficino's Latin version; and no vernacular translation was in existence.[1] Nor can I agree with Mr. Harford that their influence is to be traced in his "lofty idealism, love of allegory, and mystical views of art and nature." It is certain, indeed, that these qualities are among his leading characteristics. But it is not to the disputations of the so-called Platonic Academy—mere echoes, for the most part, of the sterile jargon of Byzantine sophists—that we should refer them. Doubtless his finely organized and eminently receptive nature was

[1] A *Compendio della dottrina di Platone in quello che è conforme con la Fede nostra*, was published at Rome in 1544 by Francesco de' Vieri; and in the same year Ercole Barbèra published at Venice an Italian version of the *Symposium*, with Ficino's comment. This is the earliest Platonic literature, I believe, to which Michael Angelo could possibly have had access.

Digitized by Google

keenly sensitive to the intellectual atmosphere in which he lived, and for the three years of his residence in the Medicean palace he breathed an air of classical Paganism. Still, the permanent effect upon his character appears to have been largely exaggerated. I shall have occasion to say more upon this subject later on in discussing the "Platonism" of his Sonnets. At present I break off from it to touch upon the third great influence which was brought to bear upon his youth.

While still a resident with Lorenzo de' Medici, Michael Angelo had begun to feel the enchantment of the greatest of his countrymen, and had commenced that study of the *Divine Comedy* which he continued with such devotion throughout his life. It was when he had returned to his father's house, after the death of his patron, that he was brought fully under the spell of one in whom the soul of the poet might seem to have revisited Florence, to do the work of a prophet, and to receive a prophet's reward. Savonarola is the true spiritual successor of Dante, in the austerity of his temperament, in the loftiness of his thought, in his keen realization of the unseen, and his terrible power of depicting it, in his love of country and hatred of injustice, in the fierceness of his denunciations and the rigid orthodoxy of his faith. In any epoch a high, ardent, and impulsive nature like that of Michael Angelo would have been drawn to such a soul by the irresistible attraction of spiritual affinities. But the greatness and purity of Savonarola stood out

Digitized by Google

in clearer splendour and a more imperious winningness from the moral littleness and spiritual corruption of the generation to which he delivered his ineffectual message, and may well have seemed to the youthful Buonarroti an example of utter whiteness. There are many ages of the world of which the historian will judge with the greater caution and hesitation in proportion as his knowledge is wide and accurate. Good and evil are ever closely blended, and the effect of a more intimate acquaintance with the facts of some periods once reckoned among the darkest in the annals of the human race, has been, to a certain extent, to re-habilitate them. But the more thorough our investigation, the more extensive our knowledge of the condition of society in the second half of the fifteenth century, the more terrible is the picture which presents itself to us, in the whole of Europe, but especially in Italy. Nor is this matter for surprise. Great periods of transition are invariably periods of religious deadness and of dissolution of manners. And in this period the world was passing through a great revolution, spiritual, moral, and political. The middle ages had run their course, and were to give place to a new order. The supernatural principles out of which their greatness and vitality had come, had, in large measure, died out, and the social framework was falling to pieces. Religion had imperceptibly lost its hold as the standard of right and wrong universally recognized, even when most widely departed from, and lived on chiefly in

Digitized by Google

that dread of retributive justice which is so ineradicable an instinct of human nature. The deities of the ancient Pantheon once more asserted their empire. Venus and Bacchus, nay, Priapus and Silenus, were worshipped with the truest cult: even in the sermons of the time, the poets and philosophers of Paganism are cited more frequently than apostles and prophets. It was an age of unblushing grossness and unrestrained debauchery. The world had lost the simple rude virtues of earlier centuries and had not learnt the self-restraint, the decorum, the politeness of more modern times. The decadence was just as great in the political order as in the religious. The franchises and immunities which had been the bulwarks of liberty in the middle ages were everywhere openly attacked or secretly undermined; and the ecclesiastical power, once the nursing mother of civil freedom, had sunk into the accomplice of secular tyranny. Perhaps there is no better mode of correctly estimating the change that had come over Christendom than by considering attentively its spiritual chiefs. The throne of Gregory VII., of Alexander III., of Innocent III. was occupied in succession during the last thirty-five years of the fifteenth century, by Pietro Barba, Francesco delle Rovere, Giambattista Cibo and Roderigo Borgia. The pontificates of these four men supply the measure of the depth to which the Papacy had fallen. In the long line of their predecessors in the Chair of Peter, some doubtless may be found in whose lives it is equally hard to discern "the signs

Digitized by Google

of an Apostle." What peculiarly distinguishes these and other Popes of the same period is, not their immeasurable remoteness from the ideal elevation of their great position, but their disregard, their apparent unconsciousness of the duties and responsibilities which the very theory of that position involves. In them the Vicar of Christ is merged in the Italian Prince, as deeply engaged as any of his neighbours in the blood-stained politics of the peninsula, as regardless of civic rights or chartered liberties: the object to which their ecclesiastical administration is directed and all the awful sanctities of their spiritual primacy are prostituted, the acquisition, no matter by what means, of territory for themselves or for their worthless families.

It was in this age of profound corruption in the Church and the world that Girolamo Savonarola arose, as one born out of due time, to lift up a last voice on behalf of religion and liberty, which seemed to be departing from the earth. To Florence, the most beautiful of Italian cities, and the most corrupt, the very centre of the brilliant Paganism which had fascinated the souls of men, the stern ascetic preacher came to testify of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. In the yoke of the Medici he saw, as he thought, the very root of the evil which paralyzed religion and morality in the city: the *festas*, the intellectual and sensual gratifications, so profusely provided by the predominant house, were, as he discerned, the mess of pottage for which the citizens

Digitized by Google

were bartering their birthright of freedom. The office said in his honour for well-nigh a century after his death in many of the Tuscan churches, where he was honoured as a Saint and a Martyr, makes mention of the swiftness of his speech, the sublimity of his eloquence, the majesty of his aspect. "The Word of God," he cried, "is in my heart like a consuming fire, and if I do not speak it will consume the very marrow of my bones." The fire did indeed consume him; another fire than that wherof he spoke; and with him the liberties of Italy and the last hope of the conservation of the unity of Christendom. But his words lived on in the hearts of those who had listened to him—to the last Michael Angelo used to recall vividly the tones of his voice—and were handed down from generation to generation in Tuscany, to keep alive remembrance of the past and hope for the future, during the three centuries of the enslavement of Italy. Well does Signor Guasti remark:

"Here was the school in which the ardent spirit of Buonarroti composed his youthful thoughts to an unwonted gravity. In such a training ground did he strengthen his heart and his genius. When I see Michael Angelo among the Piagnoni, I understand how, in the decay of faith and morals, he kept himself believing and pure: how among the satellites of tyranny he remained a child of freedom, and could still infuse into art a breath of religion and liberty."[1]

These, then, were the chief factors of Michael Angelo's spiritual and intellectual training, the

[1] *Discorso*, p. xi.

Digitized by Google

influence of the art schools of medieval Christendom, and especially of the Tuscan school, the influence of the art poetry and philosophy of antiquity, and the influence of Dante and Savonarola. In speaking of these influences I have followed the order in which they came into his life. Let us now see what his early productions disclose to us of the workings of his mind, and of the course which his thoughts took.

Among the many precious things in the Casa Buonarroti there are two bas-reliefs of especial interest as being the first original compositions of Michael Angelo. The one represents the Battle of the Centaurs with the Lapithæ; the other the Madonna with the Holy Child. These works of the boy of fourteen are very valuable revelations of him at the beginning of his career. Of the two, the battle is by far the more meritorious performance. We are told that Michael Angelo highly prized it, and took pleasure in it, even to old age. And well he might, for although not free from the technical defects, inseparable, even in the case of the greatest genius, from want of experience, it is instinct with power, daring, and originality. But it is more important to us for our present purpose, as showing how thoroughly his mind had grasped the antique conception which he set himself to represent. The spirit of the work is as truly classical as the subject. The scene lives before us as vividly under his chisel as in the verses of Ovid.

The Madonna, executed at the same period, is a work as inferior to this in inspiration as it is in execu-

Digitized by Google

tion. It is perhaps not too much to say that it reveals no trace of any real apprehension of the subject; there is no insight, no touch of religious feeling. It is an imitation—and not a successful one—of Donatello.

These two creations may both be referred to the year 1490, when Michael Angelo was most fully under the influence of Lorenzo and the Medicean coterie. The one is instinct with that influence. The other is a faint echo of past studies in Christian Art. I now proceed, starting from these two types, to glance at his artistic career through the ten years which remain of the first period of his life, as we are considering it—that is, until 1500. It will be well to set down here in the briefest way the chronology of that decade. In 1492, Lorenzo de' Medici died, and Michael Angelo, now seventeen years of age, returned to his father's house. In the course of the next year he began those profound anatomical studies to which he owed his perfect knowledge of the human form. It was at this time that he was most powerfully drawn towards Savonarola. It was probably then, too, that he began to give himself to that diligent perusal of the Sacred Scriptures of which Condivi speaks.[1] In 1494, the year of the flight of Pier de' Medici, the son of his

[1] "Ha similimente con grande studio ed attenzione letto le sacre Scritture sì del Testamento vecchio, come del nuovo, et chi sopra di ciò s'e affaticato, come gli scritti del Savonarola, al quale egli ha sempre avuta grande affezione," &c.—*Vita*, c. lxv. For his Biblical studies Michael Angelo must have used the Italian version of Nic. Malermi, a Camaldolese monk, printed at Venice, in two volumes, in 1471.

Digitized by Google

patron, he went to Venice and thence to Bologna, where he sculptured one of the angels over the shrine of St. Dominic. In the course of the following year he returned to Florence, where he remained until 1496. The next five years he passed in Rome. It will be remembered that 1498 was the date of Savonarola's martyrdom.

It was during these ten years that Michael Angelo's character was fully formed. Many of his productions which would have been most helpful to us in tracing its development, have perished,—the Hercules in marble, the wooden Crucifix which he made for the church of Santo Spirito, his statue of the youthful St. John, the sleeping Cupid, bought by the Cardinal of San Giorgio, as an antique. But of his works on classical subjects we have remaining, the Cupid, which, after so many years of loss, was so strangely discovered,[1] and which now adorns the South Kensington Museum, and the Bacchus, formerly in the corridor of the Uffizi, but at present in the Bargello. It is worth while to pause a little over these statues.

[1] Some years ago the Professor Miliarini and the eminent sculptor the Cavaliere Santarelli visited the gardens of the Oricellari, in Florence, to look at some works of art. . . The attention of Santarelli was attracted by a figure in a dark corner, and, after peering at it in the uncertain light, he called to Miliarini, and said, "Look at that." After an earnest and startled look he said, "It is his"; and the sculptor replied, "Certainly it is his." This is the statue which is now the chief ornament of the South Kensington Museum. Heath Wilson, p. 33.

Digitized by Google

They were executed in the same year, 1496, and are both very beautiful; the Cupid singularly so. But they display very little of the classical inspiration which we find in such ample measure in the bas-relief of the Centaurs and the Lapithæ. There the Greek idea is really expressed. In these statues we have, indeed, technical correctness and perfection worthy of the antique, but the thought is not that of the ancient world. The Cupid is no divinity of Greece or Rome, but a young hunter, "a muscular youth of about nineteen years of age, a figure of perfect early manhood."[1] The Bacchus is not the "Candidus Bassareus" of the ancients, with the thyrsus and the sacred cista, its mysterious contents veiled by vine and ivy leaves, the "great god of breathless cups and chirping mirth," but an exquisitely modelled and beautifully finished representation of bibulous humanity, "the countenance joyous, the eyes distorted and wanton, as of those overcome with love of wine."[2] These two works are sufficient to show how, in the six years which had seen Michael Angelo ripen into early manhood, the influence of classicalism had waned in him. They are, with one inconsiderable exception,[3] the last Pagan subjects which he ever treated in marble.

[1] Heath Wilson, p. 32. [2] Condivi, *Vita*, c. xix.

[3] Viz., the Apollo which he began in 1530 for Baccio Valori, the Pope's Commissary at Florence, but never finished; as to which, see Heath Wilson, p. 353. The statue of the Dying Adonis must be regarded as another exception, if Mr. Wilson (p. 31) is right in his judgment that it cannot have been executed much earlier than 1517.

Digitized by Google

And as the influence of classicalism had been dying away, the deeper and sterner teaching which had come to him had been doing its work by forming his mind in the mould of great and grave truths. It was in the year 1499 that his first real work of Christian sculpture was executed, the Pietà placed originally in a side chapel of old St. Peter's, and now the chief artistic treasure of the new Vatican Basilica. The wonderful perfection of this group has been acknowledged by every competent critic from the day it was unveiled until our own. I will not dwell upon its "purity of style, deep feeling and knowledge of anatomy combined with a grandeur which Michael Angelo drew from himself."[1] No language can do it justice; it must be seen, studied, felt, to be appreciated. And how eloquently does it speak the thought of the mind that conceived it. The sacred subject has become to him a living fact,[2] since the time when he first essayed to treat it. The fiery

[1] Perkins' *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 13.

[2] This comes out in his reply to the objection that he had made the Madonna too young-looking. "Non sai tu" (Condivi reports him to have said), "che le donne caste, moltopiù fresche si mantengono, che le non caste? Quanto maggiormente una Vergine, nella quale non cadde mai pur un minimo lascivo desiderio, che alterasse quel corpo? Anzi ti vo' dir di più, che tal freschezza e fior di gioventù, oltraccche per tal natural via in lei si mantenne, è anco credibile, che per divin' opera fosse aiutato a comprovare al mondo la verginità e purità perpetua della Madre. . . . Pertanto non t' hai da maravigliare, se per tal rispetto io feci la Santissima Vergine, madre d' Iddio, a comparazion del Figliuolo assai più giovane di quel chè quell' eta ordinariamente ricerca." Upon which Condivi remarks, "Considerazion dignissima di qualunque Teologo." *Vita*, c. xx.

Digitized by Google

words of Savonarola and his fiery death have burnt into his soul as realities what before were to him but notions. The things of which he has read in the most earnest of books—the Bible and Dante—are apprehended by him with the keenness and directness of a new sense, for the eyes of his understanding have been opened :—

> "deep feelings had impressed
> So vividly great objects, that they lay
> Upon his mind like substances."

Here is the artist fully formed, and the law of his working fixed.

Michael Angelo was twenty-five years of age when he produced this work, and it is interesting to turn to the records which remain to us of his life at that period. His own letters and Condivi's narrative enable us to picture it to ourselves pretty faithfully. The earliest piece of writing in his hand which we possess is a letter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, the distant cousin of his old patron, a few days after his first arrival in Rome, and it is very characteristic in its simplicity and directness :—

"I have been without delay to visit the Cardinal of San Giorgio," he says, "to whom I presented your letter. He appeared to be glad to see me, and immediately expressed a wish that I should go to see certain figures, which I spent the whole day in doing, so that on that day I delivered no other of your letters. Afterwards, on Sunday . . . the Cardinal asked me if I was disposed to make something beautiful. I answered, that I could not do such fine things, but that he should see what I could do. We have purchased a piece of marble large enough to make a figure life-size, and on Monday I shall begin to work." [1]

[1] This letter is dated the 11th of June, 1496.

Digitized by Google

He could not, indeed, afford to remain idle. Small as were his own wants—for his habits were always of Spartan frugality—his relatives at Florence were poor, and he devoted himself to the supply of their needs from the produce of his own labour. This continued throughout his life. From the first he appears to have worked incessantly. "To scorn delights and live laborious days," was, indeed, the rule which the imperious necessities of his own nature prescribed to him. "I have no friends, I need none, and I wish to have none," he writes to his father. But his solitude was peopled by "thoughts, shapes, and forms" far transcending the realities of "this working-day world," and captivating his ardent imagination. Of the verses which we know he wrote at this period, very few remain to us. There are, however, scattered throughout his poems, vague references to these visionary loves, upon which certain recent writers have based a theory that his early years were marked by sensual passion and carnal indulgence.[1] But, as Signor Guasti well remarks, "Che volesse vedervi indicata una donna piuttosto che un' altra, farebbe de' sogni,"[2] and Condivi's testimony as to the stainlessness of his youth is very direct and emphatic.[3] The

[1] Thus Mr. Pater: "All tends to make us believe in the vehemence of the passions of his youth. . . . He had not always been a mere Platonic lover." *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*, p. 70.

[2] *Discorso*, p. xxi.

[3] So bene . . . che avevan forza d' estinguere nella gioventù ogn' incomposto e sfrenato desiderio, che in lei potesse cadere. *Vita*, c. lxv.

Digitized by Google

mistress of Michael Angelo's thoughts, his "fancy's queen," was seen only by his inner eye. Long years were to pass away before a soul as high and noble as his own was to be manifested to him in a form of lofty and tranquil beauty. It was not until old age had overtaken him that the dreams of his youth were realised in the pure and equal friendship of Victoria Colonna. Of those dreams, indeed, a singularly beautiful and touching memorial remains to us. There is, in the Oxford Collection of his drawings, one[1] which may with certainty be referred to this period, representing the head of a woman, young, majestic, spiritual; the thoughtful, downcast eyes, the pure outline of the features, full of a grave, unearthly loveliness. It is, I think, the most striking of his early sketches.

Michael Angelo's pure and peaceful Pietà marks the attainment of his artistic maturity. It closes the first epoch of his life, and ushers in the second—the thirty-five years from the opening of the sixteenth century, which I have reckoned the period of his manhood. He spent the first six years of this period at Florence, executing the Bruges Madonna, the bas-reliefs of the Madonna now in the Uffizi and our own Royal Academy, and the David and St. Matthew.

[1] It bears the number 10 in the collection.

Digitized by Google

Of his perished productions referable to these six years, the most considerable was the great Cartoon of Pisa, known now very imperfectly by the chiaroscuro picture at Holkham. The year 1505 is the date of his summons to Rome by the newly-elected Pontiff, Julius II., a somewhat singular Vicar of Christ, but a true lover of art, in some sort, too, a lover of Italy, and, notwithstanding grave infirmities of temper, a kind and sincere friend to Michael Angelo. It is in 1505 that what Condivi calls "the tragedy of the sepulchre" begins; that long-protracted, oft-thwarted project of the Mausoleum of Julius, only partially realised even in the event, to which we owe the Moses, the Slaves in the Louvre Gallery and Boboli Gardens, and, indirectly, the Vatican Basilica itself. The painting of the Sistine ceiling was begun in 1508, and occupied over three years.[1] In 1513 Julius died, and was succeeded by Leo X., whose reputation as a patron of art, whatever else it may rest upon, certainly is not merited by his treatment of Michael Angelo. Six of the best years of the great master's life were frittered away by this Pontiff in abortive schemes for a façade to the Church of St. Lorenzo at Florence, and in the opening of marble quarries at Serravezza for the benefit of Tuscan trade. The only work of his accomplished during Leo's pontificate is the statue of Christ in Santa Maria sopra Minerva. Leo died in 1521, and the twenty months during which his

[1] Not twenty months, as is usually stated. See Mr. Wilson's *Life*, p. 167.

Digitized by Google

successor Adrian occupied the Papal chair were for Michael Angelo a period of freedom, religiously devoted by him to the work in which he regarded his honour and reputation as involved—the monument of Julius. Giulio de' Medici, the cousin of Leo X., became Pope in 1523, under the name of Clement VII., and for the next twelve years Michael Angelo was employed by him at Florence upon the Medicean tombs, the sacristy of St. Lorenzo, and the Laurentian library. Within these years the woe denounced by Savonarola upon Florence at last came, the extinction of her liberties—il caduto del governo civile. In 1527 the citizens resolved that Hippolytus and Alexander de' Medici should leave the city, and consign the fortresses of the State into the hands of the popular party. Two years afterwards the plans of Clement had been concerted with Charles V. Alexander the Moor, Clement's nephew,[1] was to wed Margaret, the Emperor's illegitimate daughter, and the enslavement of Florence was the condition of the ill-starred union. The citizens hearing of these things, prepared for their defence; and among other appointments we find that of Michael Angelo, as Commissary-General of the Fortifications, and "one of the Council of Ten for the Militia." Meanwhile, the Imperial forces in the pay of the Pope—they were, for the most part, the brigands who had recently sacked Rome—had advanced under the Prince of Orange, and in January, 1530, the investment of the

[1] Or son, according to some authorities.

Digitized by Google

city was complete. Michael Angelo, who had for a brief time withdrawn to Venice, on account of the perfidy of the Florentine Commander, Malatesta, had been persuaded to return, and found full scope for the exercise of his military functions; it is well known how highly the fortifications which he erected were in after-times appreciated by Vauban. It would be a dreary task, which I gladly put aside, to write the history of the siege, to chronicle the divided counsels, the folly, the treachery, which paralyzed the heroic efforts of the last defenders of the liberties of their country. In vain did the Dominicans of St. Mark take up the work of Savonarola by fervent appeals to the religious instincts of the citizens; in vain did the ancient patriotism of the Florentines assert itself in the patient endurance of hunger and disease; in vain was the heroic Ferruccio "prodigal of his great soul." The fraud of Malatesta, the overwhelming forces of the besiegers, prevailed. The struggle was protracted until the month of August, and then Florence fell. The Medici were restored, and a *régime* of tyranny, destined to last for three centuries, was established upon the ruins of the republic. In the proscription which followed, Michael Angelo narrowly escaped with his life. Nor was the dagger of the Medicean assassin his only danger. "He has fallen off in flesh," writes his friend Giovanni Battista Mini, in September 1531, "and . . . he will not live long. He works very hard, takes little nourishment, and that of a poor kind, and does not

Digitized by Google

sleep at all. For a month past his sight has been impaired, and he has been suffering from pains in the head and vertigo. In fact, his head is affected and so is his heart."[1] It was then that Clement, who had no desire for useless vengeance, and who, besides, wanted the Medicean tombs finished, came to his assistance, protecting him by a Brief from the importunity of those who were overwhelming him with commissions, arranging his difficulties with the heirs of Julius, and even compelling the Florentine Government to repay him money advanced to the Republic to carry on the struggle against the Medici. Until the September of 1534 Michael Angelo devoted his time, without interruption, to the monuments in the sacristy of St. Lorenzo. Then he left Florence—never to see it again—for Rome, at the summons of Clement, who died two days after his arrival. In another month Alexander Farnese was elected Pope, under the title of Paul III. A year afterwards Michael Angelo was nominated chief architect, sculptor, and painter to the Apostolic Chamber. He was sixty years old when this honour came to him. This recognition by the greatest in the Christian world of his mastery in the arts of design, found him on the threshold of old age. Let us look back over the long series of works which filled his manhood, and endeavour to read, however faintly and fragmentarily, the story they tell us about the artist.

They begin with the Madonna, now at Bruges,

[1] Heath Wilson, p. 368.

Digitized by Google

and end with the Madonna in the Medici Chapel at Florence. A comparison of these two great productions is full of instruction. Both have the special notes of Michael Angelo in ample measure: power, dignity, ideality. Both are endowed with a majestic tranquillity. But in the earlier work the peace is as that of the unruffled sea when "morning breaks without a sound" upon its serene infinity. In the later, it is the "great calm" after storm and tempest have raged and have done their worst, and are now hushed: a calm more profound, and solemn, and awful. The one is as the song of a hero before the battle of life has begun: the outpouring of a noble, fresh, and resolute heart. The other is a deeper strain, and in a minor key. The fight has been fought, hopes have been destroyed, dearest affections have been wounded unto death; "all that seems" has suffered shock. But the living will has endured, invincible, and "from out the dust" is lifted

> "A voice as unto Him that hears,
> A cry above the conquered years."

There is all this, and far more than can be set down with pen, in these two great works. More even than can be interpreted in the words of poets.

And if we turn to the magnificent embodiments of the "divine master's" thought and inner life which fill up the space between, each has its lesson of profound significance. To speak of them all, or, indeed, of any of them in detail, would take me too far. I

Digitized by Google

can do no more than glance hastily at the chief of them.

The first which claims our attention is the colossal David. It was completed in 1504, and, as is observed by Mr. Wilson, who considers it to mark the commencement of Michael Angelo's second manner: "In it are seen the thoughts which agitated him, as he sculptured the Deliverer. It expresses with a force which can be only felt in its presence, the calm deliberation of a being totally fearless, and deeply conscious of what depends upon the deed which he is about to do."[1] Vasari tells us that in this work Michael Angelo wished to remind the rulers of the commune, by an example, how to defend the city courageously, and to govern it justly. Certainly it is "fraught with patriotic meaning" and instinct with the spirit of freedom.

Let us go on several years to contemplate a work of very different character—the statues of the Captives, now in the Louvre. Originally designed to adorn the monument of Julius, these figures were probably begun by Michael Angelo soon after he was called to Rome by that Pontiff in 1505, and worked at from time to time during the next ten years, when they were left unfinished, as too large for the reduced proportions of the tomb:—

"Among all Michael Angelo's works," remarks Mr. Perkins, "there is probably none more beautiful than the sleeping prisoner,

[1] P. 50.

Digitized by Google

who, worn out with futile efforts to escape, rests with his noble head thrown back so as to expose his throat, his left arm raised and bent over his head, and his right arm reposing on his breast. In striking contrast to this image of sleep, the other prisoner is struggling to rend his bonds asunder, every muscle in action, and every limb contorted. His head is covered with thick masses of matted hair, and raised with an expression of rage and agony, which light up his roughly blocked out features."[1]

It is a composition of infinite pathos—a true expression of the sadness and sufferings of the mind which conceived it. It is at this period of his life that Michael Angelo writes to his father: "I endure great weariness and hopelessness. So it has been with me for fifteen years: never an hour's comfort." And in an earlier portion of the same letter he says: "It is enough to have bread, and to live in the faith of Christ, even as I do here, for I live humbly, nor do I care for the life or the honours of this world." It was in 1512 that these words were written. The cabals of his enemies, the clamours of his family, who preyed upon him all his life, the interior trials and conflicts of his most sensitive and scrupulous mind, were well-nigh enough to overwhelm him. And to these was to be added the vehement, inconsiderate impetuosity of the Pontiff. Five years before, when driven from Rome by an affront which he deemed unbearable, he wrote to the Pope:—

"A te son dato come i raggi al sole;
E del mio tempo non t' increscе o duole,
E men ti piaccio se più m' affatico."[2]

[1] Perkins' *Tuscan Sculptors*, vol. ii. p. 41.

[2] *Sonetto*, iii.

Digitized by Google

That quarrel was healed, and for the rest of Julius's life *concordia discors* reigned between them. There was too much in common between their fiery temperaments for more.

It was in the years immediately following the death of Julius, in 1513, that most of the work was done to the statue of Moses (never quite finished), which still attracts the world to his tomb—an appropriate tribute to the Pontiff who coveted the glory of delivering Italy from the "barbarians." There is something of Julius in this incomparable figure. There is still more of Michael Angelo himself. The kingliness of the artist's intellect comes out in this work in a supreme degree. It is instinct with an imperious self-conscious greatness, which is more than human. Grimm well observes: "What need we information, letters, suppositions, records respecting Michael Angelo, when we possess such a work, every line of which is a transcript of his mind?"

Worthy to be ranked with the Moses and the Captives are the colossal figures in the Medici Chapel, so marvellous in their individuality. There is nothing in ancient or modern art like those suffering superhuman creations. Florence had fallen, and it was in these statues that Michael Angelo found vent for the thoughts of which his heart was full. "He laboured at them with such energy," says Condivi, "that he accomplished them all[1] in a few months, urged rather

[1] "In pochi mesi fece tutte quelle statue." *Vita*, c. xliv. It seems from the next chapter that Condivi is speaking of the four

Digitized by Google

by fear than by love." Fear is not the emotion which at first strikes one as being expressed by those heroes and virgins, those ineffable types of Twilight and Day. The artist, indeed, may well have feared while Medicean assassins were going from house to house, shedding, like water, the blood of the noblest citizens, and seeking his life also to take it away. And those tragic figures, in the wealth of profound subtle meaning latent in them, resemble a Psalm of David. Yes, there is a deep under-tone of fear in that divine shape of the Thinker, or rather all the dreads of human life, all the inexorableness of fate, rise before him as he looks far away into infinity, and in his ears is the din of greedy Acheron. These are the works in which Michael Angelo has recorded the death of the hopes so vigorous and rich in promise when he sculptured his David. They are his monument, not to the ignoble scions of the evil-hearted race whose names they bear, but to Florence, the "donna d' angelica forma," once in the glory of her freedom, the joy of a thousand lovers, now silent and in darkness, no more to be called "the lady of kingdoms." Mr. Wilson sees in the statue of Day, half-shaped as it is from the marble, a trace of "mighty resolve and resistless power," a "prophecy, vague and obscure like all prophecies,"[1] of a far-off day when the city

statues only of Lorenzo and Giuliano, Day and Night (Le statue son quattro, &c.). Only the statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano are finished. Of the four symbolic statues those of Night and Dawn are most nearly complete.

[1] P. 392.

Digitized by Google

should awake from her death-like trance, and shake herself from the dust, and loose the bands of her neck, and again put on the beautiful garments of liberty. It may well be that these thoughts arose in the artist's soul as in his sadness he brooded over his work upon things to come. And thus in his verse he strengthens his brethren the Florentine exiles. Their sorrow is not as of those who have no hope. It is—so he expresses it in his noble poem —"una miseria di speranza piena."[1]

Let us now turn to gaze on the great work of painting of Michael Angelo's manhood—the frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Perhaps the first emotion of those who go to study them is one of horror at the barbarous maltreatment to which they have been subjected. Still, even in their ruins, they strike us with astonishment and awe. We look at that long series of solemn figures, covering the hundred and thirty-two feet of the vault; the primal mysteries of man's creation and fall are brought before us; we gaze upon the majestic prophets and mysterious sibyls, held in almost equal reverence by medieval Christianity, and at the world of mighty superhuman beings of their company, and we think what must have been the mind of the man who has left us this record of the things which he saw "in clear dream and solemn vision" as he lay there in solitude day after day and month after month. It has been observed by M. Taine, "An artist's soul bears within it a whole world,

[1] *Madrigale*, I.

Digitized by Google

and all the soul of Michael Angelo is here." Nor is it difficult to find traces of the several influences which had lastingly impressed themselves upon that soul: of Giotto, of Ghirlandaio, of Masaccio, of Savonarola whose genius, Michelet truly says,[1] is imprinted in these frescoes, of Dante whose "spirit aflame with patriotism, passionate for justice,"[2] Mr. Symonds, with good reason, finds in them. I cannot, however, deem Mr. Symonds equally happy when he seeks to see in them, too, "the philosophy of Plato," and gives sentence that "the creative God who draws Adam from the clay, and calls forth the new-born Eve in awful beauty, is the Demiurgus of the Greek."[3] I still venture to think, as all the world had hitherto supposed, that by this awful type of plastic power, Michael Angelo intended the Almighty Father of the book of Genesis, in whom he undoubtedly believed with his whole heart, and not the Demiurgus of the *Timæus*, "working upon necessity by persuasion, but able neither to compel nor to overcome it," of whom it is very doubtful whether he had so much as heard. I do not for one moment question that Mr. Symonds is impelled by mere admiration in his endeavour thus to paganize this great work. But I entertain a strong opinion that the artist would have been more

[1] "Savonarole vécut toujours dans la pensée de Michelange. . . . Le génie des prophètes qui fut en lui, il s'est envolé de son bûcher, fixé aux voûtes de la chapelle Sixtine," &c. Michelet, *Hist. de France*, vol. vii. p. 96.

[2] *Renaissance in Italy: Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 344.

[3] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

astonished than delighted if any contemporary admirer had sought thus to do him service. Unversed in what Signor Guasti aptly terms "la sapienza di un età corotta," Michael Angelo was content to accept unquestioningly, and to teach by his art, the great verities of Christianity as they came to him in the formulæ of his hereditary creed.[1] And, as it seems to me, if there is any painting which simply embodies the primary religious conceptions of his age and country, it is this painting on the Sistine vault. As a matter of fact the fresco in which Mr. Symonds has discovered the Platonic Demiurgus is, as Herr Grimm[2] has pointed out, a development of an idea of Ghiberti.

I must not pass away from the period of Michael Angelo's manhood without noticing how austere, solitary, and laborious his life was throughout it. Condivi[3] tells us that he made use of food rather from necessity than for delight. Oft-times he was satisfied with a piece of bread, which he would eat while he went on working. He slept little, and would frequently lie down with his clothes on, and rise in the night, after a few hours' repose, to go on with his labour. Of all great artists it may be said that they are not their own, they belong to their art; and in proportion to their greatness is their self-devotion. Michael Angelo lived apart, because necessity was laid upon

[1] Signor Guasti has some very judicious observations on this subject in § viii. of his *Discorso*, pp. xxxiv—xl.

[2] *Life*, vol. i. p. 31.

[3] *Vita*, c. lxvi.

Digitized by Google

him. But his detachment was not selfishness or moroseness. No greater mistake could be made than to suppose him unkind or unfeeling. His biographers dwell upon his fondness for children, his goodness towards his old servant Urbino, his princely munificence to his acquaintance. To his brothers, notwithstanding the furious outbursts of anger and impatience which their misconduct sometimes provoked, he was ever most generous and affectionate. His tender piety towards his father is evidenced in many of his letters,—perhaps in none more touchingly than in one written "in much distress and fear," to his brother, Buonarroto, in 1516, upon the occasion of the dangerous illness of old Ludovico :—

"I would by all means wish to see him again before he dies," Michael Angelo says, "even if I should die with him. . . . Arrange that nothing whatever is wanting to him needful to his soul and of the Sacraments of the Church, and let him settle what we shall do for the good of his soul.[1] Of the things needful for the body, see that he wants for nothing, for I have laboured but for him, to aid him in his need, before he dies. Arrange so that thy wife shall attend him lovingly; I will restore to all of you whatever is required."

But truly as he loved his family he could have had little in common with them. None of his relatives shared his home, nor did any woman's face brighten it. He dwelt alone, "wedded," as he was wont to say, "to his art, a wife who was too much for him."[2] No

[1] *I. e.* after his decease.

[2] "Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte, che m' ha fatto sempre tribolare, &c." Vasari.

Digitized by Google

call less imperious than that of the last effort of his country to maintain her liberties, availed to draw him from the exclusiveness of his solitude. It was indeed the artist as much as the patriot that fought in Michael Angelo. He knew well that the cause of art and liberty is the same; that the yoke sought to be laid upon his country was one "under whose inquisitorial and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish." And even then, amid the din of arms and the horror of famine and pestilence, he would steal secretly at night to work on his Medicean monuments. It was in beleaguered Florence, too, that he took up his brush again after twenty years' disuse, to paint his Leda, that wonderful picture, tragic, heroic, colossal; now known to us only from copies and engravings, and the cartoon in the Royal Academy — for the original has perished — in which the mystic substance of the old legend is expressed as neither poet nor artist has expressed it before or since. That Michael Angelo could paint such a picture at such a time is a striking evidence how really great he was:—

> "Fortis et in se ipso totus teres atque rotundus,
> In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna."

And now Fortune was to 'turn her wheel.' Michael Angelo's sixtieth year, from which we may date the last period in his life, is memorable, not only

Digitized by Google

for his appointment to an honourable office by the Pope in recognition of his artistic supremacy, but also for the beginning of that "pure and most sweet friendship," as Condivi speaks, which for eleven years was to illuminate his austere and lonely life with a brightness not of this world. It was probably early in 1536 that he first met the childless widow of Ferdinand Davolos, Marquis of Pescara, Victoria Colonna, the most gifted and illustrious woman of her age, and still in the maturity of her beauty. He has himself recorded in his verse, how "that happy spirit renovated and raised him who was almost numbered with the dead."[1] No one ever so entered into the inner sanctuary of his thoughts, or was so helpful to him: 'Uno grande amico,' he says, writing of her some three years after her death; "la quale mi voleva grandissimo bene, e io non meno a lei."[2] We know from Condivi how he mourned her, how oftentimes he was "overcome and as if bereft of reason," "sbigotito e come insensato," at the remembrance of her. And we have four Sonnets of his—every line of them as a tear of immortals—in which he describes what she was to him, what her loss is. Other friends he had, some of the noblest and best in Rome, Contarini, Maffeo, Ridolfi, and our own Reginald Pole. And his last years were cheered by the bright youthful devotion of Tommaso de' Cavalieri. But Victoria Colonna's place was never filled.

[1] See especially *Sonetto* xii.

[2] Quoted in Guasti's *Discorso*, p. xxiv.

Digitized by Google

It is strangely significant that the years which the friendship of this noble woman made the brightest in Michael Angelo's life, should have produced the most terrible of all his works. His Last Judgment, in the Sistine Chapel, was begun in 1535 and finished in 1541. This painting was judged by his contemporaries to be his greatest. The general verdict of the present day is other. The question is, perhaps, a somewhat idle one. Without expressing any opinion upon it, I may be allowed, in passing, to lament how little it seems to be understood that in order to judge sanely of a work of art, these two conditions are of primary necessity: a certain amount of æsthetic cultivation, and a correct appreciation of the artist's end. The perception of beauty does not come by nature. It is even more difficult than the perception of goodness or of truth. The eye requires education, as much as the voice, in order to attain high excellence; the eye, or rather that æsthetic sense of which the eye is the organ: and the higher the art is, the higher is the education required to understand it. "The grand style," observes Sir Joshua Reynolds, "is artificial in the highest degree; it pre-supposes in the spectator a cultivated and prepared artificial state of mind."[1] But it is certain that in our own days of incontinence of words, the great majority of those who favour the world with "art criticisms" possess no such cultivation. Superficial observers, they see superficial faults, or

[1] *Fifteenth Discourse.*

Digitized by Google

what they imagine to be faults. The high powers beneath escape them. Nor, apart from the matter of æsthetic cultivation, can it be admitted that the claim of very small men to judge summarily of very great ones, carries with it its own sanction. The works of an illustrious master are to be approached, not indeed in the spirit of blind and indiscriminate admiration, not with an abiding readiness "to wonder, with a foolish face of praise," but, at the least, with diffidence, with modesty, with a feeling that, at all events, the presumption is in favour of the master being in the right.

Again, the object which the artist had in view ought to be carefully ascertained and kept in mind. Mr. Ruskin, in a passage worthy of being deeply pondered (he uses the words indeed in another connection), divides artists as searchers after truth into three classes; the first taking the good and leaving the evil, the last perceiving evil only, while, "the second or greatest class render all that they see . . . unhesitatingly, with a kind of divine grasp and government of the whole, sympathising with all the good, and yet confessing, permitting, and bringing good out of, the evil also."[1] Foremost in this greatest class he places Michael Angelo. And with reason; for Michael Angelo's prime characteristic is absolute veracity. Not beauty in any lower sense than the beauty of truth is the object at which he aims, and pain oftener than pleasure is the

[1] *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 187. Mr. Ruskin is speaking of "naturalism," the pursuit of external truth.

Digitized by Google

feeling produced in us by his attainment of it. His supreme accuracy is, indeed, at times almost intolerable, as in his expression of the human form in the Last Judgment. But such accuracy was the object which he proposed to himself—not the gratification of the senses nor the titillation of the fancy. And here is the principle on which many of the criticisms directed against this great work are rightly met. Thus Duppa objects that in it Michael Angelo "adopted the unphilosophical notions of the darker ages."[1] The answer is that to Michael Angelo those "unphilosophical notions" were tremendous verities, which he depicted as his inner eye saw them. It is the most baseless of fancies to conceive of him as going "beyond the ecclesiastical standing-ground, and reaching one where philosophy includes the Christian faith."[2] The secret of the terror of the Last Judgment is that no shadow of doubt rested upon the artist's mind as to the tenableness of that ecclesiastical standing-ground; that he intensely believed in what he painted. The things which he set down above the altar of the Sistine were as real to him as they were to Dante, whole passages of whose *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* he has embodied. His fresco is the translation into visible form of the solemn hymn, used with such awful impressiveness by the Catholic Church in masses for the dead, and so doubtless very familiar to him, of which it has been well said that "every word is as

[1] *Life and Literary Works of Michael Angelo*, p. 197.

[2] As in Mr. Symonds' *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 346.

Digitized by Google

a peal of thunder."[1] Here is indeed the *Dies Iræ* of which Psalmist and Sibyl testified, that "day of calamity and misery," that "great and exceeding bitter day" with all its terrors: the trump of the Archangel sending its dread blast through the sepulchres, and compelling all before the Throne; the book opened and the works inquired into; the hidden things of darkness brought to light, nought escaping the recompense it has earned. The Saviour of Men is lost in the Rex tremendæ majestatis, the justus Judex ultionis: Mary ceases to intercede: the Martyrs point to the tokens and instruments of their passion, but to enhance the confusion of their murderers. Even the just is scarcely secure; for the wicked, there are the pitiless demons, the unquenchable flame, the indissoluble chain. It is the outcome of the tradition of fifteen centuries. The painter turns away from "the blind world" where "evil triumphs over virtue," where "light and courage are quenched," where "lies reign and truth dares not show his face,"[2] and sets down in this stupendous production his vision of the ultimate retribution.

Michael Angelo had almost attained his sixty-seventh year when he completed the Last Judgment,

[1] Cujus quot sunt verba, tot tonitrua. Daniel. *Thes. Hymnol.* vol. ii. p. 103.

[2] Il mondo è cieco, e 'l tristo esempio ancora
Vince e sommerge ogni perfetta usanza;
Spent' è la luce, e seco ogni baldanza;
Trionfa il falso, e 'l ver non surge fora.
Sonetto lxix.

Digitized by Google

but he had still enough energy to undertake another great work of painting in the frescoes of the Pauline chapel—grand and severe compositions, presenting no trace of old age except perhaps in the execution of details. In 1547 he was appointed architect of St. Peter's, an office which he preferred to hold without salary, devoting himself to it, and to the conflicts with stupidity and dishonesty which it entailed, "pro salute animæ." A model made by him still exists—the last work of his aged hands—which shows the Church as he conceived of it. Unhappily his design was subsequently departed from to the irreparable loss of the building. But the unrivalled cupola, too far advanced before his death to admit of material alteration by his successors, is no unworthy monument of his pious labour. Among the other architectural works of his old age are the Farnese Palace, the cornice of which is judged by many to be the "grandest architectural feature of modern Rome," and the stately edifices crowning the Capitoline Hill, which assumed their present form from his designs. But of higher interest still are the Church and Carthusian Convent of St. Mary of the Angels on the Viminal. The Church is in fact the *calidarium* of the Baths of Diocletian, "a vast hall with red Egyptian granite monolithic columns, adapted by Michael Angelo for Catholic worship." "Nothing exists," writes Mr. Wilson, "which excels the plan of this Church in beauty and variety of form. . . . The eye is delighted by the evidence, on all sides, of imagination,

Digitized by Google

taste, and skill." Unfortunately, like so many other of the chief Christian monuments of Rome, it suffered grievous things in the reign of Benedict XIV., that learned and pious Pontiff, the most considerable figure among the Popes since Sixtus V., whose very learning and piety were perverted by the taste of the age into the service of destruction. But the great cloister still remains in all the grand simplicity of Michael Angelo's design; a vast quadrangle, surrounded with a hundred white and slender columns, upon which rest arches of inexpressibly graceful curve, supporting a range of monastic cells covered with pale red tiles. In the centre is a fountain, low murmuring, clear, and placid, lending to the scene perennial freshness and a deeper calm. Four mighty cypresses overshadow it, touching memorials, fitting types of the great master who in his green old age planted them, an old age of unwithered leaf and seasonable fruit, to the last.

Among the most precious of the productions of Michael Angelo's last years, must be reckoned his Sonnets, most of which were written when he was past seventy. A great authority, half a century ago, recorded the judgment, that "these compositions do not fulfil the anticipations of the lofty bold originality to which Michael Angelo's name gives birth."[1] But Frederick von Schlegel had not Michael Angelo's genuine text before him. His criticism was directed

[1] F. von Schlegel. *Æsthetic and Miscellaneous Works*, p. 227 (Eng. tr.).

Digitized by Google

to the *rifacimento*,[1] the editor of which had done his best to remove or veil whatever was most characteristic of the great author. His success was indeed only partial. Even in the *rifacimento* one finds "disjecti membra poetæ"—profound and striking thoughts scattered among shallow and commonplace lines. Wordsworth, who also of course had only the *rifacimento*, judged more truly than Schlegel. He writes, "So much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable."[2]

More fortunate than these illustrious critics, we now possess the original text of Michael Angelo's poems, in Signor Guasti's volume, well described by Mr. Symonds as "a masterpiece of laborious and minute scholarship." It is from Signor Guasti's text that Mr. Symonds has executed his English version, essaying, not without a considerable measure of success, the task which Wordsworth thought so arduous, and which must have been more arduous still in respect of Michael Angelo's authentic compositions. An unlearned man, the poet knew little of the laws of metre or even of grammar. His verses are therefore technically faulty, unpolished, and rude: "the rough-hewn blockings out of poems," Mr. Symonds well says,

[1] First published in 1623 by Michael Angelo the younger, a far-off kinsman of his great namesake.

[2] See his note to his English version of some Sonnets of Michael Angelo.

Digitized by Google

"rather than finished works of art."[1] But, like everything that he produced, they bear the impress of his peculiar power. Every word has a true meaning and stands as the symbol of a thought. "Ei dice cose," says Berni, and so it is. In his verses, as in his sculpture and his painting, he seizes the very essence of the thing and presents it in its living reality.

Signor Guasti, in the very valuable discourse which he has prefixed to his edition, remarks that Love and Art, Religion and Country, are the arguments of Michael Angelo's poetry, the first two ideas blending into the idea of Beauty, the last two into the idea of Virtue. This is undoubtedly true, but perhaps it would be even truer to say that Beauty[2] was the supreme object of desire to Michael Angelo's artist-soul, and that his conception of beauty was the highest. Like St. Augustine, from examining[3] whence it is that he admires the beauty of bodies celestial or terrestrial, whence that he forms true judgments on mutable things, he reaches up to "That which Is," the uncreated Beauty, the absolute Truth —"the Truth who is Eternity, the Love who is Truth,

[1] Symonds, *Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella*, Int. p. vi.

[2] So Condivi: "Egli non solamente ha amata la bellezza umana, ma universalmente ogni cosa bella, un bel cavallo, un bel cane, un bel paese, una bella pianta, una bella montagna, una bella selva, ed ogni sito e cosa bella e rara nel suo genere, ammirandole con maraviglioso affetto; così il bello dalla natura scegliendo come l' api raccolgono il mel da' fiori," &c., c. lxv.

[3] *Confess.* l. vii. c. x.

Digitized by Google

the Eternity who is Love."[1] "Comeliness of the body, the fair harmony of time, the brightness of the light, so gladdening to these eyes, sweet melodies of every kind, perfumes of flowers and ointments and spices, manna and honey, the delectableness of lovely limbs," are to him, as to the greatest of the Latin Fathers, but the dim shadows, the faint emanations of the Creator, whom they proclaim, and to whom they lead.[2] Symbolism is not to him a mere play of the fancy. That the things seen are the doubles of the things unseen, he regards as the first and the greatest of truths. It is beauty—la beltà—as he holds,—

"che muove
E porta al cielo ogni intelletto sano."

But thus to ascend, the mind must be purged from earthly desires and drawn by a divine influence—

"Ascender senza grazia è pensier vano."[3]

With this mysticism Michael Angelo was penetrated —this Christian mysticism, whose aim it was to realise that union of man with the Divinity, of which Plato nourished the dim presentiment, and concerning which his successors of the Alexandrian school so boldly speculated. This is, in effect, the underlying thought of his poetry, the key to his philosophy, the explanation of what Duppa calls his "jargon of Platonism

[1] *Confess.* l. vii. c. x. [2] *Ibid.* l. x. c. vi.
[3] See the madrigal "Per fido esemplo" (No. vii.).

Digitized by Google

and crude metaphysical divinity,"[1] and Mr. Harford, less opprobriously, his "Platonic sentiments and tendency," "a consequence," in the judgment of that writer, "of the early bent imparted to his mind by his intimate connection with the Platonic Academy of Florence, and of his having become familiar with the finest parts of Plato's writings in the translation, probably, of Marsiglio Ficino."[2] I have already observed that Michael Angelo would have been unable to avail himself of Ficino's Latin translation if he had desired to do so, and that the permanent influence of Lorenzo de' Medico's literati upon his mind has been much overrated, partly, doubtless, through want of apprehension of this fact. It may be allowed indeed that there are passages in his poems which, without improbability, may be regarded as echoes of long-past discourses in Lorenzo's Florentine palace or villa amid the shades of Careggi. Such passages are not, however, very numerous or important, and they are, if I may so speak, of the accidents rather than of the substance of his verse. Any acquaintance which he possessed with the Platonic or neo-Platonic system of philosophy must have been slight and superficial, and we must have recourse to a very different source for an explanation of the difficulties of his muse. The conception of Truth, Beauty, and Justice, as but aspects of the Supreme Good, which is God, the doctrine of the purely negative existence of

[1] *Life and Literary Works of Michael Angelo*, p. 223.
[2] *Life of Michael Angelo*, vol. ii. p. 109.

Digitized by Google

Evil, the recognition in the external world cognisable by the senses, of the art of the Supreme Artificer, the cult of Beauty, as the most vivid image of Truth, the view of Love as the longing of the soul for Beauty, a longing which is the seed of virtue or of sin, according as the object which it chooses is the higher or the lower, the scorn of mere sexual love as a brute appetite, and the exaltation of intellectual as the refiner's fire, through which the soul must pass if all the dross of earth is to be purged away,—all these, and many like notions, which are the leading ideas of Michael Angelo's poetry, often vaguely and obscurely expressed, may be found in Dante "writ large," and duly formulated. But Dante was here only the popular spokesman of medieval thought, according to the verse,—

"Theologus Dantes, nullius dogmatis expers."

And the two authorities who most largely influenced the metaphysical speculations of the middle ages—even more largely, in my opinion, than Aristotle—were Boethius and St. Augustine: Boethius, whose *De Consolatione* is simply an exposition of the leading doctrines of Plato, modified by Christian faith, and St. Augustine who, as Neander justly remarks, "like Origen, obtained his scientific discipline from Platonism,—in whose speculative intellect the philosophical interest and element unconsciously mixed in with the Christian and theological," and "from whom this mixture of elements was transmitted to the scholastic

Digitized by Google

philosophy, which stood in immediate connection with his own."[1] There is as much, and as little, reason for attributing Platonism to Michael Angelo as to the most distinctively Christian of poets and the schoolmen whose teaching he popularized, to the martyred apologist of Catholic orthodoxy against the Arians, and to the great Latin Father who did most to shape the theology of the Western Church. They all belong to what Mr. Emerson describes as "a very well marked class of souls, namely, those who delight in giving a spiritual, that is, an ethico-intellectual, expression to every truth, by exhibiting an ulterior end which is yet legitimate to it." If Platonism be understood in this sense, Michael Angelo's poetry is deeply imbued with it. And nowhere has it found more characteristic expression than in the following Sonnet, Mr. Symonds' translation of which I give side by side with the original:[2]—

"Veggio nel tuo bel viso, signor mio,
Quel che narrar mal puossi in questa vita;
L'anima, della carne ancor vestita,
Con esso è già più volte asciesa a Dio.
E se 'l vulgo malvagio isciocco e rio
Di quel che sente, altrui segnia e addita;
Non è l' intensa voglia men gradita,
L'amor, la fede e l'onesto desio.

"From thy fair face I learn, O my loved lord,
That which no mortal tongue can rightly say;
The soul imprisoned in her house of clay,
Holpen by thee to God hath often soared;
And though the vulgar, vain, malignant horde
Attribute what their grosser wills obey,
Yet shall this fervent homage that I pay,
This love, this faith, pure joys for us afford.

[1] Neander's *Church Hist.* vol. iii. p. 502 (Eng. tr.).

[2] Symonds' *Sonnets of Michael Angelo and Campanella*, Intro. p. 2.

Digitized by Google

A quel pietoso fonte, onde siàn tutti
S' assembra ogni beltà che qua si vede,
Più c' altra cosa, alle persone accorte;
Ne altro saggio abbiàn nè altri frutti
Del cielo in terra: e s' i' v' amo con fede,
Trascendo a Dio, e fo dolce la morte."[1]

Lo, all the lovely things we find on earth
Resemble for the soul that rightly sees,
That source of bliss divine which gave us birth:
Nor have we first fruits or remembrances
Of heaven elsewhere. Thus, loving loyally,
I rise to God and make death sweet by thee."

The sentiment of this poem is identical with that which I have cited from St. Augustine.[2] The last line is peculiarly significant. The thought of death is in constant recurrence in Michael Angelo's verses. It comes, not, as in the poets of antiquity, to excite to the enjoyment of the passing hour, but to chasten, to tranquillize, to subdue. Michael Angelo held it to be "the only thought which makes us know ourselves, and saves us from becoming a prey" (so he expresses it, with characteristic earnestness) "to kindred, or

[1] It might be thought from Mr. Symonds' version that in the twelfth line there is a reference to the doctrine of *anamnesis*. But this is not so. I feel sure that Mr. Symonds will allow, on consideration, that the word "saggio" cannot possibly bear the meaning of "remembrances," but must be translated, example, specimen, or—what will suit his verse—experience. I am of course aware that there are a few passages in which Michael Angelo may fairly be considered to have had the Platonic notion of Reminiscence more or less clearly before his mind. But to take literally, "a poet soaring in the high reason of his fancies," and to conclude as Mr. Pater does, from one of these passages (see *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*," p. 76), that "he thus accounts for love at first sight," as though "a previous state of existence" were a settled article of belief with him, is surely somewhat full-flavoured doctrinairism.

[2] See p. 50.

Digitized by Google

friends, or masters, to ambition, avarice, and other vices and sins which rob a man of himself."[1] To this self-dissipation he thought himself to be more inclined naturally than any one.[2] His artist soul was sensible above measure to the fascination of delightful things. "Born for art," he tells us in one of his Sonnets, "neither deaf nor blind," but with perceptions of beauty exquisitely keen, it was with him as though "a heart of sulphur" had been joined to "flesh of tow and bones of dry wood."[3] One spark was enough to kindle the flames of earthly desire. And in the recollection of death was his only remedy—

> "Non trovo altro soccorso
> Che l' imagin sua ferma in mezzo il core
> Chè dove è morte non s' appressa amore."[4]

---

[1] It is thus that Michael Angelo expresses himself in Giannotti's dialogue, as quoted by Signor Guasti in his *Discorso*, p. xxxi:— "Bisogna pensare alla morte. Questo pensiero è solo quello che si fa riconoscere noi medesimi, che ci mantiene in noi uniti, senza lasciarci rubare a' parenti, agli amici, a' gran maestri, all' ambizione, all' avarizia, e agli altri vicii e peccati che l' uomo all' uomo rubano e lo tengono disperso e dissipato, senza mai lassarlo ritrovarsi e riunirsi. Ed è maraviglioso l' effetto di questo pensiero della morte; il quale, distruggendo ella per natura sua tutte le cose, conserva e mantiene coloro che a lei pensano, e da tutte l' umane passioni li difende.

[2] "Io sono il più inclinato uomo all' amare le persone, che mai in alcun tempo nascesse. Qualunche volta io veggio alcuno, che abbia qualche virtù . . . io sono constretto ad innamorarmi di lui, e me gli do in maniera in preda, che io non sono più mio, ma tutto suo." *Ibid.*

[3] *Sonetto* xviii.

[4] *Madrigale* xvi.

Digitized by Google

Thus was he penetrated with the stern ascetic spiritualism which is so marked a feature of medieval Christianity. He had in him the stuff of which a St. Bruno or a St. Romuald might have been made. There is a passage in a letter of his addressed to Vasari in 1556, expressive of his admiration of the lives of solitary ascetics. He had set out on a pilgrimage to Loretto, but was obliged to stop short at Spoleto, where he visited the hermits, whose cells were in the forests of the neighbouring mountains. On returning to Rome he writes, "I had great pleasure in visiting those hermits. Only a part of me returned to Rome. Of a truth, peaceful existence dwells in those woods."[1] This longing for peace comes out very conspicuously in some of the Sonnets referable to the latest years of his life. In one of them he likens himself to a frail bark, at last nearing a tranquil harbour after fierce storms.[2] Another, which opens with a similar image, I will quote in its entirety, with Mr. Symonds' English Version.

[1] Heath Wilson, p. 523. One is reminded of the lines of Milton:—

"And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell."

Herr Grimm, with curious infelicity, speaks of this journey into the mountains as "the first expedition Michael Angelo made in search of nature" (vol. ii. p. 385). It is one of many examples which might be given of this learned man's transference of the sentiments of his own age to Buonarroti's; and it is the less excusable because Michael Angelo himself says that he went to see the hermits—not "nature."

[2] *Sonetto* lxxiii.

Digitized by Google

"Giunto è già 'l corso della vita mia,
Con tempestoso mar per fragil barca,
Al comun porto, ov' a render si varca
Conto e ragion d' ogn' opra trista e pia.
Onde l' affettuosa fantasia
Che l' arte mi fece idol' e monarca,
Conosco or ben quant' era d' error carca,
E quel ch' a mal suo grado ogn' uom desia.
Gli amorosi pensier, già vani e lieti
Che fieno or, s' a duo morte m' avvicino?
D' una so 'l certo, e l' altra mi minaccia.
Nè pinger nè scolpir fia più che quieti
L' anima volta a quell' Amor divino
Ch' aperse, a prender noi, in croce le braccia."

"Now hath my life across a stormy sea
Like a frail bark reached that wide port where all
Are bidden, ere the final reckoning fall
Of good and evil for eternity.
Now know I well how that fond phantasy,
Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall
Of earthly art, is vain; how criminal
Is that which all men seek unwillingly.
Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed.
What are they when the double death is nigh?
The one I know for sure, the other dread.
Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul that turns to His great love on high,
Whose arms, to clasp us, on the cross were spread."

The thought with which this Sonnet concludes was with him to the end. Just before sunset on the day on which he passed away, we are told, he turned to his friends and said, "When you come to die, remember the Passion of Jesus Christ."[1] They were his last words.

Such was the great man whom Mr. Symonds claims as, "the Prophet or Seer of the Renaissance:"[2]

[1] Vasari *Vite*, &c. vol. xii. p. 267.
[2] *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 384.

Digitized by Google

the supreme artist in whom "the genius of the Renaissance culminated."[1] How far is this claim well founded? The answer depends entirely upon the sense in which the word Renaissance is used. It has been well described as "a question-begging word." There is a large class of writers, and a far larger class of readers, with whom it stands as the symbol of something very grand, but very vague, and so very misleading; for in the historical province, no less than in the legal, the maxim holds, "Dolus latet in generalibus." Thus M. Michelet in words which I cited in the last chapter,—"L'aimable mot de Renaissance ne rappelle aux amis du beau que l'avènement d'un art nouveau et le libre essor de la fantaisie. Pour l'érudit, c'est la rénovation des études de l'antiquité; pour les légistes, le jour qui commence à luire sur le discordant chaos de nos vieilles coutumes." The two things which belong to this age more than to all that went before it, he thinks, are, "the discovery of the world," and "the discovery of man." "La seizième siècle," he continues, "dans sa grande et légitime extension, va de Colomb à Copernic, de Copernic à Galilée; de la découverte de la terre à celle du ciel. L'homme s'y est retrouvé lui-même."[2]

It would, perhaps, be difficult to compress into the same number of words a greater number of fallacies. In the first place, nothing is more

[1] *Revival of the Fine Arts*, p. 342.

[2] *Hist. de France*, vol. vii. Int. p. 1.

Digitized by Google

unscientific than a rigid demarcation and precise labelling of history by epochs. As in the existence of the individual man, so in the existence of human society, no period stands alone. Each is the outcome and consequence of what went before. Neither art, nor poetry, nor philosophy, nor physical science, ever suffered a break in continuity of tradition from classical times to our own. The links which bind the medieval to the old Roman world are as real, and as certainly to be found by those who will give themselves the pains to trace them, as are the links which bind the world of this nineteenth century to that of the middle ages. In strictness there has been no re-birth of the human mind, because the human mind has never died; no re-discovery by man of himself, because man, in his worst estate, was not without the consciousness of himself, of his high dignity and great destinies. And, as a matter of fact, it is not to the period glorified by M. Michelet's brilliant rhetoric that we must go for the germs of our present intellectual greatness, for the inventions and discoveries which lie at the root of our material civilization, for the establishment of the only political institutions now existing, which have succeeded in reconciling individual freedom with stability of government. If we will use the term "Renaissance" in a sense at all approaching that of M. Michelet, we must put back the date of the re-birth for some centuries before the time of Columbus; if not,

Digitized by Google

centuries before the time of Columbus; if not, indeed, to the days of Charlemagne and his cloister schools, at all events to the age of vast intellectual activity, when Dante's mystic song opens the volume of modern poetry; when the revived study of Roman jurisprudence spreads from the law schools of Bologna throughout Christendom; when St. Thomas Aquinas and his fellows among the scholastics survey the whole field of human thought with a comprehensive mastery, and map it out with a subtlety and precision unknown to the ancients, and too little appreciated, because too little known, among ourselves; when Roger Bacon in his cell at Oxford, starts the physical sciences upon the great career which they have pursued to our own times, and anticipates their principal achievements; when Niccola Pisano lays the foundations of the art schools that were to cover the face of Europe with those vast edifices which (in the words of Milman) can hardly be contemplated without awe, or entered without devotion, and to fill its churches and palaces with pictures which we admire and wonder at and copy, but cannot rival. If the Renaissance be thus dated, there need be no hesitation in recognising Michael Angelo as its supreme fruit, for what Niccola Pisano began, culminates in him. Like that great master, and the long series of his illustrious successors, he brought to his work all the science he had, and it was far beyond their science The world had never before witnessed such technical perfection as his; it has never witnessed it since. But his spirit is that of

Digitized by Google

the great artists of the middle ages. His differences from them are purely conventional.[1] There is in his work nothing of the old Hellenic spirit of bondage to physical life, and nescience of spiritual and moral force; there is nothing of the modern spirit of plagiarism from the antique, and servile copying of the living model. "He sums up" (Mr. Pater confesses) "the whole character of medieval art in that which most clearly distinguishes it from classical work,"[2] and so may, without impropriety, be called by those who take pleasure in the appellation, its "Prophet, or Seer," as using it to body forth the loftiest and severest lessons of the religion in which he believed; to express the infinite and unceasing aspirations of human nature.

It is not, however, to the thirteenth century that we must turn for the movement eulogized as the Renaissance by M. Michelet and a school of writers of whom Mr. Symonds and Mr. Pater are the chief representatives among ourselves. Their Renaissance really begins from the fall of Constantinople—although

[1] I may here remark how groundless it is to regard the employment of the nude or the use of allegories borrowed from the Pagan mythology, as inconsistent with the true laws of Christian art. In the catacombs, the earliest nurseries of that art, the undraped figure is sufficiently common, and the myths of classical antiquity are pressed into the service of faith. Thus in the catacomb of SS. Peter and Callixtus, Adam and Eve are found in the state of paradisiacal nudity and innocence. Bas-reliefs of Cupid and Psyche adorn the sepulchres of the primitive Christians, and Orpheus drawing the hearts of all men figures there as a type of Christ.

[2] *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*, p. 62.

Digitized by Google

by some of them its first period is placed much earlier —and is essentially associated with the "Revival of Letters," that is, of the culture of Greek and classical Latin, which the word was originally employed to denote.[1] The Revival of Letters was, no doubt, a very important incident in the transition of society from the medieval order to the modern, although to regard it as the sufficient key to the comprehension of the great revolution, religious, intellectual, and moral, which marked that transition, is exceedingly delusive. The ideas wrought out in the ninety years of Michael Angelo's life were too numerous, too great, too subtly diffused, to be concluded under this formula. The Revival of Letters was but one among many contemporaneous movements of the teeming human intellect; only one factor in the sum of things—a factor working with diversity of operation in the different regions of Europe, with their different races and histories, and institutions and conditions. Speaking generally, it may be said that in the North its results were religious, in the South irreligious. In Germany it contributed directly to the Protestant Reformation. In Italy, where scholars threw themselves upon the study, not of the Sacred Text and the other sources of Christian doctrine and practice, but of the poetry, philosophy, and art of the

[1] M. Littré has the following in v.: "Époque où les lettres grecques font leur entrée en occident; ce qui excita la plus vive ardeur pour l'étude des monuments littéraires de l'antiquité; cette époque commence à la prise de Constantinople in 1453, qui causa l'émigration de beaucoup de Grecs instruits en Italie."

Digitized by Google

ancient world, the educated class—already half-hearted in their allegiance to Catholicism—became paganized, and the loosening of the ties of religion and morality was felt throughout society. This has been candidly stated, and certainly not overstated, by Mr. Symonds :—

"The study of the classics," he writes, "and the effort to assimilate the spirit of the ancients, undermined men's Christianity, without substituting the religion or the ethics of the ancient world. . . . Men left the ground of faith and popular convention for the shoals and shallows of an irrecoverable past.[1] While professing Stoicism they wallowed in sensuality, openly affected the worst habits of Pagan society, and devoted their energies to the explanation of foulness. The peculiar turn they gave to mental training by diverting attention from patriotic duties to literary pleasures, by denationalizing the interests of the student, and by distracting serious thought from the affairs of the present to the interests of the past, tended to confirm the political debility of the Italians."[2]

Heine describes the movement as "a reaction against Christian spiritualism,"[3] and "a rehabilitation of the flesh." Mr. Pater enumerates as its chief characteristics "care for physical beauty, worship of the body, the breaking down of the limits which the religious system of the middle ages imposed on the heart and imagination,"[4] and "a taste for sweetness."[5] It would be easy to multiply similar quotations, but it is unnecessary. The movement, which was essentially a falling back upon the world of sense and

[1] *Revival of Learning*, p. 520.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 516.
[3] *De l'Allemagne*, vol. i. p. 215.
[4] *Studies in the Hist. of the Renaissance*, pref. xi.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 2.

Digitized by Google

matter, is accurately expressed by the word "Humanism," now naturalized among us. And it is Humanism which writers of the school I have in view intend when they speak of the Renaissance. Is Mr. Symonds well founded in claiming Michael Angelo as the "Prophet or Seer" of this Renaissance? Are we to find Buonarroti a Humanist?

It is difficult to understand how any but a negative answer can be returned to the question; how this stern, heroic soul, so pious and pure and self-devoted —*amatore divinissimo*—can be ranked with the crowd of gluttonous, obscene pedants who were the apostles of Humanism; of foul tyrants and dissolute unbelieving prelates who were its nursing fathers; of shameless women who were its Ilias and Egerias. Are his austere Madonnas, his awful Prophets and Sibyls, his David, his Moses, his Captives, his Medicean statues — all instinct with grave and severe thought, interpretations of the ideal and supersensual —are they to be regarded as the outcome and manifestation of "the worship of the body" and "a taste for sweetness"? Does his intense patriotism mark him as the adherent of a movement which was everywhere an instrument of Cæsarism? Does his "lofty rime" speak of "a reaction against Christian spiritualism" and of "a rehabilitation of the flesh?"

There is, indeed, one sense, and, as it seems to me, only one, in which Mr. Symonds's phrase has a true meaning. Michael Angelo is the prophet of the Humanistic Renaissance, as Jonah is the prophet

Digitized by Google

of Nineveh, or Lot of Sodom. His whole career is a rebuke of Humanism. To his own age he was the witness and interpreter of better things. To us he is the witness and interpreter of the true character of his age: "a light shining in a dark place"; the last luminary of art and freedom in Italy, before their sacred flame goes out—

"And universal darkness covers all."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE Eighteenth Century is, in some respects, the most difficult period in European history to estimate truly. In the first place, it is almost impossible for us to contemplate it with that measure of impartiality which we may with more reason hope to command in surveying a remoter time. The task of writing of it is, indeed, "periculosæ plenum opus aleæ." The fires, which were working below the surface of events throughout it, to burst forth at last in the volcanic flames and lava torrents of that world earthquake, the French Revolution, are still smouldering beneath the thinnest crust of treacherous ashes. The blood which was shed in that great convulsion still stains the instruments of death, and cries for expiation. The grave questions then debated with such terrible earnestness are still unsolved. Yet, living and working in the present, as this eighteenth century is, in one sense, in another, it is quite gone from us. Its tone, its temper, its tastes, its political organization, and its social order, have utterly passed away; no man may bring them back; for all things serve their

Digitized by Google

time. The French Revolution, as one of the clearest heads contemporary with it saw, was "a great crisis—the most astonishing Revolution that had hitherto happened in the world:"[1] it was, as a distinguished thinker of our own day has expressed it, "an incident in a great change in man himself, in his beliefs, in his principles of conduct, and therefore in the outward arrangements of society."[2] Between us and our ancestors of a hundred years ago there is a great gulf fixed. And if we attempt to look across it, and to take a general view of the last century, the scene which meets us is one which may well dazzle and confuse the steadiest vision. Consider the events, the persons, that crowd the annals of that brief space of the world's history: the old Bourbon Monarchy slowly rotting away in France; the new Hohenzollern kingdom spreading its roots and extending its branches in Germany; the Hanoverian family gradually becoming acclimatized among ourselves, and firmly settled on the British throne; Poland blotted from the map of Europe; the Holy Roman Empire dwindled to the "shadow of a great name," "phantasmal, not to say ghastly;" Marlborough and Eugène; that singular "Protestant hero," Frederick the Great, and that equally singular paladin of Catholic France, Maurice de Saxe; Newton and Halley, Pope and Bolingbroke, Swift and Addison, Johnson and Burke, Bossuet and Fénelon, Voltaire and

[1] Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* Works, vol. iv. p. 158.

[2] J. S. Mill's *Dissertations and Discussions*, vol. i. p. 57.

Digitized by Google

Rousseau, and the whole tribe of the encyclopædists; Jansenism and Methodism, Clive and a nascent Indian Empire, Arkwright and the spinning-wheel, Watt and the steam-engine, the coal and iron mines and all the new industries which were to transform the North of England; not to speak of

"Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux"—

such is the mighty maze which rises before the mind's eye. Is it possible to discern any underlying plan?

To that question many answers might be given. There are numerous points of view from which the eighteenth century may be fruitfully considered. In this chapter I shall confine myself to one. I shall regard it as the closing years of a period in European history: the years in which the ideas animating that period are to be seen in their ultimate development and final resolution. I speak of the period which extends from the close of the Middle Ages, marked by the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, to the French Revolution in 1789, and which is, with much propriety, called the Renaissance Epoch. For the movement from which it takes its name was a rebirth of that ancient Paganism which in the political order is Absolutism, and in the intellectual, Materialism. Whatever else it was or was not, it was certainly this. The Catholic Church claims to be at once an Empire and a Philosophy, and to rest both her rule and her doctrine upon a supernatural foundation. On that foundation she had reared the edifice of medieval

Digitized by Google

society. She had knit Europe into a Christian Commonwealth, having its centre in the Apostolic See. She had hallowed civil polity in particular States in Christendom, by impressing upon it a religious sanction through the rite of blessing and crowning princes, ever recognizing the limited and fiduciary character of monarchical power, and emphatically proclaiming in her ritual the contractual nature of the relations between governor and governed, by the solemn stipulations preceding the imposition of the diadem.[1] Of this kind was her action in the public order. In the intellectual, as has been happily said, she "inaugurated a supernatural rationalism," whence arose those vast structures of the Schoolmen, structures "as marvellous in architectonic completeness of their own as the magnificent domes and cathedrals, which at the self-same time were everywhere covering the face of Europe with novel forms of grace and beauty." The ideas of the Renaissance were equally hostile to medieval philosophy and to medieval polity. They struck at the supersensuous foundation upon which both rested. By the end of the sixteenth century those ideas had taken firm root in the European mind, and had begun to germinate. No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that the nascent scepticism was confined to the geographical limits of Protestantism, or that its earliest and most successful preachers were among the nominal adherents of Luther or Calvin. The three writers

[1] As in our own ancient Coronation Office.

Digitized by Google

of the sixteenth century who were most deeply imbued with it, and who—to a great extent unconsciously, perhaps,—did most to diffuse it, were all professed Catholics. They were Erasmus, who contributed more than any one else to bring the scholastic philosophy into disrepute; Rabelais, whose grotesque inventions barely veil the most cynical and audacious impiety; and Montaigne, in whom we have, in germ, the essentials of the philosophy both of Voltaire and of Rousseau. As to the public order, if we look upon Europe as a whole, we find that long before the sixteenth century had closed Christendom had become little more than an empty phrase. Frederic von Schlegel truly observes, "that bond of union, that high fellowship of Christian feeling, which had united its various States was in a great measure dissolved; the different Powers of Europe engaged in a system of alliances, subject to various fluctuations, but all formed on the principle of a mere dynamical equilibrium, just as if Government and social force, even under the influence of Christianity, were nothing but a mere material weight, a lever of physical power."[1] And if, turning from the general European system, we survey the particular States which composed it, we find the same idea actively at work. It is simple matter of historical fact that at the beginning of the sixteenth century free political institutions were in operation throughout Europe, from Castile and Arragon to the shores of the Vistula and the Niemen. By the

[1] *Philosophy of History*, p. 398 (Eng. tr.).

Digitized by Google

close of the century the new Cæsarism had made good its position against those local liberties, those class and municipal privileges, those venerable immunities of many kinds, which had so long been the fortresses of liberty. There were, indeed, exceptions. The United Provinces—their heroic story, stained as it is with loathsome deeds of sacrilege and ferocity, must surely touch a chord in every English heart—had vindicated Dutch freedom against the perjured tyrant whose authority, according to the tenor of the ancient charters to which he was sworn, was *ipso facto* determined by his violation of them. The Flemings had in the event preserved no small remnant of their old autonomous institutions. Liberty still maintained herself in her Helvetian fastnesses. In the Holy Roman Empire the medieval polity remained unchanged in many of the smaller States, and especially in the Free Cities. These were bright spots upon the map of Europe. But in the whole of the Iberian peninsula, the whole of France, the greater part of Germany, the New Monarchy was firmly established. A large portion of Italy was enslaved by foreign conquerors, while three of her most famous Republics—Florence, Pisa, and Sienna—had sunk under the not less hateful domination of the Medici. In England, the tact of Elizabeth had led her to soften down the usurpations of Tudor Cæsarism upon English liberty; but she abandoned none of them. And the tendency of Governments towards absolutism was everywhere even more clearly marked in the eccle-

Digitized by Google

siastical province. There was a complete reversal of the relations which had existed in earlier ages between the civil and the spiritual power. Then the Church might with truth have applied to herself the words of the Sacred Scripture, "By me kings reign and princes decree justice." Now, it was on the sufferance of kings that she existed; through the decrees of princes that she was permitted, in any degree, to fulfil her mission. Instead of the State depending upon religious sanctions, the Church had come to depend upon political. Material power had taken the place of spiritual. Nay, the Church and ecclesiastical institutions became the chosen instruments of despotism. Thus, the Spanish Inquisition was the engine by which Philip hoped to bow the free necks of the people of the Netherlands to his gloomy despotism. And in England the doctrine of the royal supremacy was the Anglican dogma especially cherished as completing the power of the Crown; a denial of it was a bar to the enjoyment of civil rights. The aim of the New Monarchy throughout Europe was to reduce the spiritual order to the position of an accomplice. This aim was attained most easily and directly in Protestant countries. But in Catholic also, the ties of allegiance to the Holy See, which stood in the way of it, were ever more and more loosened. "The power of the clergy lost its principal support in the political influence of the Popes, for whilst kings assumed a tone of greater boldness against the Holy See, the Popes, on their side, were obliged to treat with great

Digitized by Google

circumspection in everything relating to temporal affairs."[1]

The first stage in the history of Renaissance ideas may, roughly speaking, be said to terminate with the sixteenth century.[2] It was the period of their rise and propagation. The next stage may be considered to end in 1688, a year which certainly is a landmark, both in the intellectual and in the political history of Europe. The seventeenth century was a period, as Biot expresses it,[3] of "universal fermentation of the European intellect." The mere names of Bruno and Campanella, of Bacon and Descartes, of Gassendi and Torricelli, of Spinosa and Hobbes, of Leibnitz and Bayle, may suffice to indicate how great that fermentation was. But it was reserved for Locke to throw the new philosophy into the shape in which it was most potently to affect the world. He is the very source and fount from which were derived the doctrines of the French *philosophes*, who in the next century were to be the ultimate exponents of the Renaissance principle of materialism. The *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Heine observes in his mocking way, "became their Gospel—the Gospel they swore by. John

[1] Balmez's *European Civilization*, p. 356 (Eng. tr.).

[2] I suppose we may date their rise from 1453, the year of the fall of Constantinople, when the Middle Ages are generally considered to close. The publication of Montaigne's *Essays* in 1580, and the ruin of the Catholic League by the Battle of Ivry in 1590, may be considered to mark their firm establishment. But the chronology of ideas can never be more than approximate.

[3] J. B. Biot's *Mélanges Scientifiques et Littéraires*, vol. i. p. 27.

Digitized by Google

Locke," he continues, with a gibe at ourselves (he is ever ready to suspend England upon his upturned nose), "John Locke had been to school to Descartes, and had learnt from him all an Englishman could learn, Mechanics, the Analysis, and the Calculus. There was only one thing he could not comprehend: that was 'innate ideas.' He perfected the doctrine according to which we obtain all knowledge by exterior experience. He made of the human mind a sort of mechanism. The whole man becomes in his hands an English machine."[1] In this excellent fooling there is, I think, a substantially fair account of Locke's philosophy. It was in 1688 that his famous *Essay* first appeared.[2] "From it," Mr. Leslie Stephen justly remarks, "we may learn what were to be the dominant ideas of the next century."[3]

The date, 1688, is at the least as important in the political order as in the philosophical. It indicates the high-water mark in the reign of the sovereign, who is the very type and personification of the Renaissance idea of monarchy. From that year, France and all Europe enter upon a new era in the political order as in the intellectual; an era lasting just a hundred years, and closing with the outbreak of the French Revolution; an era which is the ultimate phase of the Renaissance period. It is this era,

[1] *De l'Allemagne*, vol. i. p. 65.

[2] In an abridged form in Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Universelle*. It was published in its complete form in 1690.

[3] *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 74.

Digitized by Google

exclusive of the great catastrophe which ends it, that I must be understood to mean when I speak of the eighteenth century—the hundred years which date from 1688. But before I enter upon it, it will be necessary for me to survey in some detail the condition of Europe, and especially the position of France and of England, in its opening year.

If we consider the European system at the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century, we find the predominance of the French monarchy the most notable feature in it. England was still convulsed by intestine strife; Spain, suspected a century before, and not without reason, of aiming at universal dominion, had already sunk into incurable decay. The power of Austria, a source of general apprehension after the conquest of the Palatinate, had been effectually restrained in 1648 by the Peace of Westphalia, by which instrument France acquired Alsace, and began the career of territorial aggrandisement distinctive of the reign of Louis XIV. That monarch was then a child of ten, and it was not until the death of Mazarin, thirteen years later, that he assumed the administration of public affairs. Two years before, his territories had been further increased, and this time at the expense of Spain. The Treaty of the Pyrenees, signed in 1659, had given to France Roussillon, and had extended her northern frontier to

Digitized by Google

Gravelines. Lord Macaulay, in a passage which is conspicuous among his many brilliant summaries, has well described the kingdom that Louis XIV. began to rule. "The territory of France," he writes, "was not quite so extensive as at present; but it was large, compact, fertile, well placed both for attack and for defence, situated in a happy climate, and inhabited by a brave, active, and ingenious people. The State implicitly obeyed the direction of a single mind. The great fiefs which, three hundred years before, had been, in all but name, independent principalities, had been annexed to the Crown. Only a few old men could remember the last meeting of the States-General. The resistance which the Huguenots, the nobles, and the parliaments had offered to the kingly power, had been put down by the two great Cardinals who had ruled the nation during forty years. The Government was now a despotism, tempered by courteous manners and chivalrous sentiments. The means at the disposal of the sovereign were, for that age, truly formidable. His revenue, raised, it is true, by a severe and unequal taxation which pressed heavily on the cultivators of the soil, far exceeded that of any other potentate. His army, excellently disciplined, and commanded by the greatest generals then living, already consisted of more than a hundred and twenty thousand men. Such an array of regular troops had not been seen in Europe since the downfall of the Roman Empire. Of maritime powers France was not the first. But though she had rivals on the sea,

Digitized by Google

she had not yet a superior. Such was her strength during the last forty years of the seventeenth century, that no enemy could singly withstand her, and that two great coalitions, in which half Christendom was united against her, failed of success."[1]

This was the State which Louis XIV. began to govern in 1661, and which he ruled with a strong hand, for well nigh fifty years, upon the principle enunciated in his famous maxim, "*L'État c'est moi.*" To pour contempt upon the Parliaments, to confiscate the municipal immunities, to depress the nobles, to enslave the Church, in short, to overthrow every check upon the direct action of the royal power,—such were the chief ends of his administration. And here, indeed, he but continued the policy of his predecessors, reaping the full fruits of the victories over the ancient free institutions of France which Louis XI. and Francis II. had definitively gained, and which Henry IV. and Richelieu had consolidated. But the policy of Louis XIV. went far beyond theirs. He aimed at transforming the character of the monarchy, and he succeeded in his aim. As a matter of fact, the power of the French sovereign had been built up by a series of usurpations as barefaced as any recorded in history—usurpations which had converted him from the first among the Barons to their lord and master. This is an incontestable fact of history, but it is a fact which it suited Louis XIV. to ignore,

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. i. p. 156.

Digitized by Google

or which, very probably, he did not know. Another foundation than the historical was necessary to him for his authority, and he found it ready to his use. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a new conception of the royal power, first [1] originated, as it would seem, in Protestant England, had become fashionable in France. That conception was formulated in the doctrine of the immediate Divine right of kings, a doctrine which is essentially opposed to the Catholic idea, and to the confutation of which the two foremost theologians of the age, Suarez and Bellarmine, applied their powerful intellects. By means of this doctrine, which impressed the seal of the religion of Jesus Christ upon the worst of the political systems of Paganism, Louis XIV. converted the French monarchy from a great hereditary magistracy to a theocratic institution, and placed himself as sovereign upon the footing of David and Solomon; while its complementary tenet of absolute passive obedience carried the royal authority to a pitch of which the Hebrew kings had never dreamed. It was a momentous revolution, nor were its effects by any means confined to the temporal order. It

[1] I am, of course, acquainted with the theory as to the power of the Head of the Holy Roman Empire, deduced from the jurisprudence of ancient Rome by the legists of Bologna in the time of Frederick Barbarossa: a theory for which Dante endeavours to provide a philosophical basis in his *De Monarchia*. But that theory is essentially different from the Anglican and Gallican doctrine of immediate Divine right, though doubtless containing the germ of it.

Digitized by Google

may be said of Louis XIV.'s reign with literal truth :—

> State policy and Church policy are conjoint,
> But Janus faces, looking different ways.

The authority of the Holy See, slight as it had now proved to be in practice, was almost the sole remaining check upon Absolutism, and it was the constant aim of Louis to depress it. The Sovereign Pontiffs were subjected by the Eldest Son of the Church to a series of gross humiliations, at which even Protestants stood aghast. It would be hard to find in all history a more complete and insolent defiance of the primary principles, not merely of justice, but of decency, than that which was exhibited by Louis towards Alexander VII., in the affair of the Duc de Créqui. His quarrels with Clement X. as to the matter of ambassadorial exemption, and with Innocent XI. regarding the privilege of sanctuary, are consistent manifestations of the same spirit. And the determination of this monarch to reduce the ecclesiastical order to abject obedience by separating it from the centre of Catholic unity, found fitting expression in the Resolutions of the Assembly of the French Clergy in 1682. Never was there a more bitter irony than that by which the provisions of the Four Articles are termed "the Gallican Liberties." They were the fetters whereby the clergy were enslaved to the civil power, and trammelled in the exercise of the most essential ecclesiastical functions. With justice

Digitized by Google

did Innocent XI. characterize the action of the French bishops who supported them—Bossuet, alas! conspicuous in the servile throng—as "an abandonment of the sacred cause of the liberties of the Church." And bitter reason in the event—as I shall have occasion hereafter to show—had the spiritualty of France to bewail their thus burning incense upon the altar of Cæsar. The atrocious measure by which this act of semi-apostacy[1] was soon followed, and which, as I shall point out by-and-by, stands in intimate connection with it—I mean the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—was as little prompted by zeal for the Catholic religion as were the insults offered to the Sovereign Pontiff. It was the manifestation of the Oriental despotism of a monarch who could not endure that his subjects should profess any creed but his, who judged uniformity in religion the necessary complement of the administrative unity of his kingdom. It was the King's religion, not the Pope's,[2] which the royal dragoons, fit apostles of such a cult, spread with fire and sword. Two years afterwards—significant comment upon the Catholic ardour of Louis!—the ambassador of the most Christian King entered Rome with the military display of a conqueror, and endeavoured, in the teeth of the Papal prohibition,

[1] So it was judged at the time. "It was observed by contemporaries," Ranke remarks, "that if France remained within the pale of the Catholic Church, she stood on its very threshold, ready to quit its enclosure." *Hist. of the Popes* (Mrs. Austin's Trans.), vol. iii. p. 120 (Fourth Edition). [2] See Ranke, u. s.

Digitized by Google

to assert, by force, the obnoxious right of asylum. Ecclesiastical censures were pronounced upon the envoy, and the precinct in which he dwelt was laid under an interdict. Louis retaliated by seizing Avignon, and by shutting up the Nuncio in St. Olon.

The foreign policy of Louis XIV. (I do not reckon his dealings with the Holy See under this head, they belonged strictly to his domestic policy) was based upon precisely the same principles as his home administration. In both he stands out as the supreme example of monarchical egotism, the incarnation of the spirit of Renaissance Cæsarism, the arch-exponent of the theory (in the words which I have cited from Schlegel), that government is "nothing but a mere material weight, a lever of physical power." Might is his sole test of right or wrong. Neither moral nor religious considerations, neither sense of honour, nor fear of shame, avail to restrain him from the prosecution of any enterprise which promises to be advantageous. No more solemn engagement could have been entered into than the Treaty of the Pyrenees, by which, upon his marriage, he renounced for himself and his descendants, all claims which might accrue through his wife, the Infanta Maria Teresa. No title could be more preposterously bad than that by which six years afterwards, upon the death of his father-in-law, Philip IV., he laid claim to the Spanish Netherlands in right of his Queen. But the new King of Spain was a delicate child: the Regency was in the hands of his mother, a weak woman; and the

Digitized by Google

Spanish Power was utterly unable to resist the large and well-disciplined armies of France, commanded by generals such as Turenne and Condé. The Triple Alliance for a time prevented the French Ahab from obtaining more than a portion of the Naboth's vineyard which he coveted. But the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle lasted only four years. Charles II. was bought by the Secret Treaty of Dover, and then the full wrath of Louis was poured out upon the Republic of Holland which had dared to thwart him in his scheme of plunder. The Dutch, ready, as their noble leader expressed it, to die in the last ditch rather than to yield, did not quail before the "instans tyrannus" nor flinch from their firm resolve. With a heroism that took captive the wondering world, they called the sea to their aid, and the waters were a wall to them, on their right hand and on their left, as unto the Israelites of old. The iniquitous war that had been levied against them convulsed the whole of Europe, and ended in the territorial aggrandizement of France. By the Peace of Nymwegen, Louis obtained the province of Franche Comté, which extended the limits of the monarchy to the eastern slope of the Jura and the borders of Switzerland. It was in 1678 that this treaty was signed. And the next ten years may be regarded as the culminating period of the career of Louis. Politically considered, France was the arbiter of Europe. Spain, humbled and plundered, had sunk into the second rank of States. The Emperor was fully occupied with dangers

Digitized by Google

from Turkey, and with other troubles of his own. The only Power which could have opposed any serious obstacles to the predominance of Louis was ruled until 1685 by a prince who was his pensioner, and whose favourite mistress was his agent. And when Charles II. died, his successor was not less the vassal of the French monarch. But the ascendency of France was not merely political. In arts, in fashions, in literature, she was the dictator of Europe. She was the model State to which European sovereigns desired to assimilate their own countries. Even the boorish potentates of Germany imitated not only the periwigs and the architecture of Versailles, but the public policy of the French monarch. It was natural enough that Louis should revolve vast designs of future aggrandizement, and that Europe should be agitated by the fear of universal dominion. It is not wonderful that in the intoxication of his success, with none "to stay his hand, or say, what doest thou?" he

> Assumes the God, affects to nod,
> And seems to shake the spheres.

The rape of Orange, the warlike entry of Lavardin into Rome, the bombardment of Genoa, are all signal manifestations of the supreme arrogance of Louis during this decade. It closes with a deed, surpassing in its lawlessness and wickedness, even the worst of these lawless and wicked acts. The ravage of the Palatinate was one of those crimes which arouse

Digitized by Google

inextinguishable hatred in the breasts of a people, and leave to future generations a terrible legacy of vengeance. A thrill of horror ran through Europe; but Louis was proud of his work of butchery and arson. A medal with the legend "Heidelberga deleta," was struck by his order and still witnesses to his satisfaction. This is the supreme achievement of the monarch whom his age called Great. It affords a true index of the sense in which alone history can allow him that title: great in his enmities, great in his frauds, great in his cruelties and oppressions, great in his profusion of blood and waste of treasure, great in his arrogance and impiety, in his insolence, his rapacity, and his lusts. In him the new Cæsarism of the Renaissance culminates. And his career culminates in his Palatinate exploit of 1688. From that year may be dated the open decadence of his power, and the secret decay of his system of government, and of his family. It was as if the stern sentence of the Hebrew prophet had been passed upon him. "Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am God and I sit in the chair of God . . . whereas thou art a man and not God, and hast set thy heart as if it were the heart of God . . . therefore I will bring thee to nought, and thou shalt not be, and if thou be sought for, thou shalt not be found any more, for ever."

It was just one month after the army of Louis had entered the Palatinate, that William of Orange set sail for England. The direct results of his daring

Digitized by Google

enterprise were of great importance to the history both of England and of Continental Europe: the indirect results of still greater. The English Revolution was the death-blow, in this country, to the system in which the Tudors had embodied the political idea of the Renaissance, and which the Stuarts had fortified, chiefly through the help of a subservient clergy. It was a vindication of the old lines of the Constitution, which the Puritan Rebellion had unsuccessfully endeavoured to maintain. It was the proclamation to Europe that, in one nation, at least, there were left freemen who would not bow the knee to the Baal of Absolutism. Time was it that a deliverer should come to the rescue of our perishing liberties, and preserve to the world one example of the free monarchy of the Middle Ages. Under James, the system of government in England had approximated very closely to the French model, which he loved. After the suppression of Monmouth's Rebellion, he had at his absolute disposal close upon twenty thousand regular troops. The judges, headed by Jeffreys, were his creatures. The corporations had been packed with his nominees. The House of Commons consisted, for the most part, of high Tories. The doctrines of immediate divine right and passive obedience still formed the staple of the teaching of the clergy. With such advantages any monarch, endowed with ordinary tact and discretion, might have made his position practically absolute. James, instead of ordinary tact and discretion, possessed a dulness of apprehension and a dogged obstinacy of

Digitized by Google

temper, for the union of which, in one man, it would be difficult to find a parallel in history. It was this character which led him to endeavour to compass his ends by the most hazardous means—means that alienated from him the support of the classes in which he most trusted, and exhibited him to the world as a Prince devoid of faith and honour. Looking to the issue, Englishmen, as a body, certainly have no reason to complain of the policy which delivered them from the sway of a race incapable—as four successive monarchs had shown—of ruling constitutionally, and which substituted a parliamentary title for a hereditary one. But there is one class of Englishmen—the class whose interests, after his own, James undoubtedly had most at heart—who owe mainly to him the withholding of their civil rights, and the continuance of oppressive laws, for more than a century. It is matter of history that the more weighty of English Catholics, at the time, disapproved of the arbitrary measures of the sovereign. It was from converts, whose characters were doubtful, or whose motives were obviously open to suspicion—the Tyrconnels, the Castlemaines, and the Jermyns—that James found encouragement and approval. The saintly Pontiff, who then sat in the chair of Peter, openly blamed his policy. It is a curious and significant fact, that William of Orange, if not aided in his expedition by the money of Innocent XI., which is a doubtful point, had certainly the Pope's sympathy and diplomatic support.[1]

[1] Much exceedingly valuable information on this subject will

Digitized by Google

The immediate consequence, then, of the Revolution of 1688, so far as the internal history of our country is concerned, was to rescue from utter destruction the old medieval liberties of England, still, thank God, so full of vigorous life; to expel from Great Britain the Renaissance idea of monarchy, and to divert her from the course in which the politics of the Continent were to flow unchecked for another century. The immediate consequence to Continental Europe was to bring about the organization of those powerful leagues which broke the power of Louis, dispelling his dreams of European dominion, and shaking his monarchy to the very foundations. These were the direct results of the Revolution of 1688. Its indirect results were even more momentous. There can be no doubt that by it, chiefly, we were saved from participation in the French Revolution of a hundred years later; and I think I shall be able to show reasons for believing that we owe to it, in large measure, the preservation of the masses of our people, during the next century, from the contagion of the last phase of Renaissance philosophy, so fatal to religion and morals throughout the Continent; and, consequently, the exceptionally large amount of Christian faith and practice at present to be found among us. I consider that the

be found in the seventh volume of Droysen's *Geschichte der Prussische Politik*. It has long been known that Innocent saw with pleasure the downfall of James. But Professor Droysen's researches have thrown a flood of light upon the Pontiff's share in bringing about that event.

Digitized by Google

spectacle of the free institutions of England exercised a potent influence in hastening the downfall of the absolutist system of the Renaissance abroad: and that the principles, upon which those institutions still happily repose, are the only principles whereon the union of civil order and rational liberty can be built up, amid the political ruins even now covering the face of Europe.

Such, then, is the importance of the year 1688. It marks the end of the second and the beginning of the third or ultimate era in the history of the Renaissance principle, the progress of which I have traced in outline up to that date. I now proceed to my proper subject, which is to sketch its working in the world, both in the public and in the intellectual order, from the year 1688 to the great catastrophe of 1789, whence we date the beginning of a new epoch. I shall have to consider, first, the progress of the Renaissance political idea, next of the philosophical, in Continental Europe during those hundred years, and then I shall glance at our own country, and indicate the lessons which, as I judge, are taught us by its very different history during that period. Whatever the other difficulties of my task—and they are numerous and grave—it is simplified by the fact that the general march of society is in the same direction. Putting England aside, almost the whole of Europe presents,

Digitized by Google

notwithstanding superficial peculiarities and partial divergences, a unity of movement which is very striking. The progress of other Continental countries was, for the most part, in lines parallel to that of France. Paris was, as it were, the heart of Europe, where the attentive ear might catch the pulsations of its political and spiritual life. The age was, as it is often called, *le siècle Français.*

Let us first then turn to France. Over the last quarter of a century of Louis XIV.'s reign I shall not linger. I have already dwelt at sufficient length upon the character of his system. In that character the reverses of his later years wrought no change. His last important public act, indeed, was the supreme manifestation of the egotism which dominated his whole career, and which had eaten out in him, in the event, all sense of public or private duty, of the fundamental obligations of morality, nay, of the ordinary decencies of life. The Edict of 1714, placing in the order of succession to the throne his illegitimate children—already raised to the rank and privileges of princes of the blood—was a public consecration of adultery from which even the Cæsarism of the old world would have recoiled, while it dulled popular veneration for the monarchy by the dishonour which it cast upon the throne. The annulling of the royal testament the day after the king's decease, by the Parliament of Paris, was hailed throughout France as a rejection of despotism arrived at an intolerable excess. The earliest measures of the Duke of Orléans

Digitized by Google

upon obtaining as Regent the plenitude of the sovereign power, free from the trammels which his uncle had sought to impose from the tomb, appeared to indicate a change in the polity so long established. The right of remonstrance, of which the Parliaments had been deprived in 1672, was restored. Scope for the employment of the magnates of the kingdom in public affairs was sought to be afforded by the organization of six administrative councils.[1] Twenty-five thousand men were restored to agriculture by the reduction of the army, and some amelioration was attempted in the method of collecting and administrating the finances. But these measures were infructuous. The great judicial corporations, powerful instruments of opposition, were powerless to reform, and the protracted strife with the executive authority into which they soon plunged, was absolutely sterile. The nobles were unversed in the conduct of business: the six councils proved wholly inefficient, and recourse was had to the old means of administration. The economical condition of the country underwent no improvement. The fifty-nine years during which the grandson of Louis XIV. sat upon the French throne,

[1] Schlosser quotes the following sentence from an autograph letter of the Regent's to Cardinal de Tremouille:—"La situation présente de ce royaume, la disposition des esprits lassés de voir chaque partie du gouvernement entre les mains d'un seul homme pendant tout le règne précédent, la necessité de rétablir la confiance en donnant une nouvelle forme à l'administration des affaires, firent recevoir cette proposition avec un applaudissement universel." *History of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Davidson's Trans.), vol. iii. p. 222.

Digitized by Google

witnessed, not merely the continuation of his predecessor's system, but its further development—for there is no standing still in politics,—under conditions which necessarily conducted it to its fall. No doubt the imbecility of Louis XV. conduced greatly to the final catastrophe; but probably the doom of the ancient order was irrevocably sealed before his time. The internal decay of France as Louis XIV.'s life drew to a close, is contemporaneous with the decline of its external predominance. Nor were an empty treasury and a starving people that monarch's worst legacies to his successor. The exhaustion of France, when his reign of well nigh three quarters of a century ended, was felt in other and far more important quarters than the material. All the elements of healthy national life had gradually died out from society. The nobility, sunk into the titled lacqueys of the monarch, crowded the ante-chambers of Versailles, strangers to all political ambition beyond that involved in the greed of place or pension, consuming their energies in barren quarrels among themselves, fawning upon the king and the king's favourites, insolent to the rest of the world. The clergy had still the semblance of an independent order. But it was only the semblance. Bound hand and foot by the fetters of the Gallican liberties, they had become merely a department of the royal service, and their assemblies were regulated by the court through courtier bishops. The Parliaments alone prevented the power of the monarch from attaining the proportions of Turkish or Muscovite despotism;

Digitized by Google

but the check which they imposed upon it was of fitful and ineffectual operation. It was indeed the legists themselves who had sustained the doctrine that the monarch was "the sole and perpetual representative of the nation," while the fashionable theology averred that he was the immediate and special delegate of God himself. In truth all power and all public functions were assumed by the king. France was his private domain with which it was lawful for him to do what he would. The revenues of the State were his own personal income, to be expended on wars or women, public works or private whims, as he might determine. The service of the State was a vast and ill-organized administration, which was barely within the grasp of Louis XIV. in his most vigorous hour, and which slipped from his enfeebled hand when old age overtook him. He was the soul of it, and his death was the signal for its dissolution. It is easy now, after the event, to see how during Louis XV.'s long reign of official anarchy, that dissolution was being surely accomplished; how the monarchy was ever growing more and more impotent in its action; how a whole order of things was becoming bankrupt; how, as the elder Mirabeau puts it, the art of government had resolved itself into the art of stripping the people bare. It required extraordinary gifts to see it then: for never was the external splendour of the throne greater than during that half-century; never were the pretensions of Renaissance Cæsarism more fully maintained; never was the prerogative

Digitized by Google

of the Crown pushed further. In 1770, a few years before his death, Louis XV. when bringing, as he fondly hoped, his protracted dispute with the Parliament of Paris to a close by an act so high-handed that his grandfather at the summit of his power would have shrunk from it, could assert: "Nous ne tenons notre couronne que de Dieu: le droit de faire les lois par lesquelles nos sujets doivent être conduits et gouvernés nous appartient, à nous seuls, sans dépendance et sans partage." It is curious to reflect that little more than a hundred years ago, we find a French sovereign employing such language unchallenged: language almost identical with that which in the fourteenth century cost our Richard II. so dear.

As I have said, the political progress of most Continental countries during the eighteenth century, was in lines parallel to that of France. The same theories were in possession, were officially recognized, and were practically carried out. Shorn as the French monarchy was of much of the prestige which had attached to it in the palmy days of Louis XIV., its magnificence was still very dazzling, and very attractive to the other Continental monarchs; it was the type to what they sought to approximate. During the whole of the reign of Louis XV. the advance of absolutism throughout Europe, in the machinery and outward expression of government, was unchecked. In the two great Catholic States especially, Austria and Spain, the notion of immediate divine right which had become the main idea of the French polity, was asserted with

Digitized by Google

a baldness and intolerance very difficult, in these days, properly to realize. The monarchs were as demigods; and the bare mention of the liberty of the subject was shuddered at, as a kind of sacrilege. But Schlosser truly observes, "the French system was received and imitated by all the European governments, even in those countries where the form of the State was not military and monarchial, as was the case in most."[1] The tendency everywhere was to concentrate all authority in the hands of the Prince, and so—inherent vice of despotism!—to leave the throne without any sort of equipoise. Thus, in the Republic of Holland, a few years before the middle of the century, the Stadholder had obtained an accession of power and dignity fraught with peril to the hard-won liberties of the country. Sweden, which in 1720 had recovered its ancient constitution, set aside in the previous century for unlimited monarchy, fell in 1772 under the despotism of Gustavus, to whom France had supplied money wherewith to effect this revolution. Three years before Struensee had introduced into Denmark a similar change, which was destined to survive the brief authority of its author. Some remarkable words were addressed by the Doge Renier, in 1762, to the Venetian Senate, warning them of the danger which threatened them, through the hatred of monarchs for institutions which to any extent savoured of freedom.

[1] Vol. iii. p. 1.

Digitized by Google

All the sovereigns of Europe, he urged, were watching the Republics, ready for aggression. One of the most curious and important phenomena of the age—which I can only barely mention here—is the rise of the new Hohenzollern monarchy, an aristocratic military system, dealing with a nation as a regiment; differing in very essential particulars from the old sovereignties, but like them recognizing material force as the foundation of power, and avowedly disregarding in politics the obligations of morality and justice. This is, indeed, a special note of the eighteenth century. Alike in Catholic States and in Protestant, we find the same cynical indifference to law, the same open recognition of might as synonymous with right; the same loss of all conception of a public conscience. It was natural, therefore, that the one power in the world, whose very *raison d'être* it is to bear witness to the claims of right and the supremacy of conscience, should be almost effaced from the political order. Cardinal Hergenröther has remarked, "the eighteenth century was a period of the deepest servitude and ignominy for the Catholic Church;"[1] and if it were necessary a vast mass of evidence might be adduced in support of the assertion. But it is unnecessary,

[1] *Catholic Church and Christian State*, vol. ii. p. 415 (Eng. tr.). Frederick of Prussia accurately describes the position of the Holy See in one of his letters to Voltaire (dated 13th August, 1775). "Le pape," he writes, "vu la situation où il se trouve, est obligé de donner des brefs et des bulles tels que ses chers fils les exigent de lui. Ce pouvoir, fondé sur le crédit idéal de la foi, perd à mesure que celle-ci diminue."

Digitized by Google

for the fact is patent. Never had the influence of the Holy See fallen so low in the European system since that system had been called into existence. France had set the example to the Catholic world of withdrawing the spiritual order from the control of its head, and of turning the clergy into a department of the administration, ready to do the bidding and to receive the rewards of despotism. The other Powers of Europe, here as elsewhere, were ready to follow the example set by France, nay, to better the instruction. So low had the Vicar of Christ fallen in the eyes of the world that the smallest, the most insignificant of the Italian States thought it an honourable distinction to be embroiled with the Pontifical Government. Among the pettiest potentates there was "none so poor to do him reverence," while the great monarchies were able by threats and entreaties to make him appear to the world as their accomplice in an act which gave a deadly wound to his spiritual power, and which in its utter lawlessness and wickedness may be paralleled with the worst deeds of the worst of the pagan Cæsars. The Society of Jesus was the last remaining bulwark of the authority of the Holy See. No better illustration of the political condition of Europe, as the eighteenth century wore on, can be found than that which is supplied by the story of its suppression. Often, therefore, as the tale has been told, it is worth while to pause here to recall it, and to regard it from this point of view.

Digitized by Google

More than two centuries had passed away since Ignatius Loyola had founded the institute which he named "The Society of Jesus," because, as he told his companions, it was designed "to fight against heresies and vice, under the standard of Christ." In the impulse by which he was inspired devout Catholics recognize a divine prompting. The most sceptical Protestant will not, at all events, refer it to the stirrings of any low or selfish ambition. It is not possible, nor indeed necessary, for me to trace, even in outline, the career of the mighty order which had its beginnings in the little church of Montmartre, to relate how the burning zeal and indomitable patience, and winning sanctity of its fathers, brought whole nations to Christ in the dim mysterious East and in the new-found world in the West, while reviving the honour of His name among European populations who unworthily bore it. Nor need I inquire into the offences which came as time went on, and the fame of the new apostles spread abroad, and they were compelled to dwell in kings' houses—lodging ever perilous to the prophets of God—the great ones of the earth turning to them, not only for spiritual counsels, but sometimes also for secular guidance. I am by no means concerned to reduce to true proportions the accusations made against the Society; far less to justify the policy, upon all occasions, of those who from time to time governed it, or to vindicate the teaching of every moral theologian who has worn its robe. It is enough to state, what

Digitized by Google

is indisputable, that the sons of St. Ignatius did a work for a parallel to which, in the history of the Church, we must go back to the earliest ages of Christianity. No obstacles wearied their gentle patience, no dangers shook their calm courage. Enduring, as seeing Him who is invisible, they seemed to account persecution the proper element of their lives, and to be in love with death. Their end, indeed, was wholly supernatural; but in pursuing it they were eminent benefactors to the world in the natural order also. Devoting themselves to the training of youth in sound learning and religious education, they numbered in their community the most distinguished representatives not only of theological but of secular science. In their missionary labours they were the pioneers of geographical discovery and material civilization, while founding the only political communities the world has seen in these latter days, in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ was simply adopted as the rule of life. Even their bitterest enemies, the *philosophes* of the last century, praised their Paraguayan settlements as a model for the world,[1] while a historian of our own age—hardly less hostile to them and to the religion they diffused—confesses that life there was "like a calm and tranquil sea which reflected the image of the Creator."[2] Pouring their peaceful hosts from their centre at Rome throughout the whole world, they

[1] Montesquieu, Condamine, and Raynal were of this opinion.

[2] Schlosser, vol. iv. p. 222.

Digitized by Google

subdued it more effectually than the ancient legions, for the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but spiritual; their aim not to rule over the bodies, but to free the souls of men. "Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?" they might well have asked, had it not been incompatible with the spirit of humility which dominated them, that they should think anything of themselves as of themselves. And the verse would have borne a wider as well as a profounder sense upon their lips, than it bore upon the lips of Virgil. Their sound went out into all lands, the sound which had greeted the birth of Him by whose Name they were called, "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra Pax," and in every land they triumphed in the might of that Name. Churches and shrines were the trophies of their bloodless victories; or if not bloodless, purchased by the blood of their own martyrs; not the din of battle, but the music of holy bells, marked their progress; not broken hearts, but healed consciences; not cities plundered, and women ravished, and infants wantonly slain, but well-ordered towns, and virgins dedicated to God, and little children delivered from oblation to devils and brought into the family of Jesus and Mary. Such were their labours of which every region of the earth was full. When the eighteenth century had but half completed its course, we are told, the Society numbered twenty-two thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven men, divided into thirty-nine provinces, occupying twenty-four professed houses, six hundred and sixty-nine

Digitized by Google

colleges, sixty-one novitiates, a hundred and ninety-six seminaries, three hundred and thirty-eight presidences, and two hundred and twenty-three missions. Into such a mighty tree had the grain of mustard seed grown; a tree whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth: and its leaves were for the healing of the nations.

The suppression of the Society of Jesus is an event the true significance of which has been very imperfectly understood. The first step towards a proper appreciation of it is the recognition of the fact that it was the result of a European movement. The monstrous cruelties inflicted by Pombal upon the Society have fascinated the imagination of men. Hence they have been accustomed to look to Portugal as the very source and fount of the persecution, and to see in the measures taken against the Jesuits in other countries, but a consequence of the contagion of a bad example, a feeble imitation, a pale reflection, of the barbarities of Carvalho. And this is natural enough. The deeds of the Portuguese minister were well fitted to arrest the attention of Europe and to excite the ferocity ever latent in human nature. Even Schlosser confesses that they "can find their parallel only in the kingdoms of the East or in Russia."[1] For myself I do not hesitate to avow my conviction that the worst horrors of the French Revolution pale beside the barbarities of the Inconfidenza, and that the judicial

[1] Vol. iv. p. 241.

Digitized by Google

murder of the saintly Malgrida was a worse atrocity —because more destitute of any shadow of justification—than the worst deeds of the Committee of Public Safety. But in truth the action of some of the other European powers was hardly less inhuman than that of the Portuguese. "On the night of the 31st of March, 1767 (I am quoting the narrative of Schlosser), "all the Jesuits in every part of Spain were arrested as if by magic, and their estates seized upon. It is supposed that more than five thousand ecclesiastics, who were for the most part very learned, meritorious, and highly-esteemed men, were taken prisoners in this single night. . . . . Ships had been long before prepared, and were lying ready on different parts of the coast, in order that they might be conveyed to Civita Vecchia." "The fate of these unfortunate men," Schlosser continues, "was sufficient to melt a heart of stone. Many of them were old, weak, or ill. Some of them were persons of the highest worth and distinction. But all were crowded together in the ships like African slaves, and compelled to undergo unspeakable sufferings." Similar measures of violence were adopted against the Jesuits of Naples and Parma. And if the conduct of the French and Austrian Governments was less merciless, it was equally effective. The crowning blow was dealt through the Apostolic See itself. On the 2nd of July, 1773, yielding to overwhelming pressure brought to bear upon him by the Ambassadors of France, Spain, and Naples, and seeing no other way of preventing a widespread schism, Clement XIV. issued

Digitized by Google

the Brief *Dominus et Redemptor Noster*, and the Society of Jesus, after a career of two-hundred and thirty-three years, ceased to exist.

It is of the highest importance towards a correct appreciation of the history of the eighteenth century to understand the true causes which led to this catastrophe. Many explanations of it have been tendered, some of them of surprising ineptitude. Such are those which account for it by the anger of a courtesan or the hatred of a politician;[1] while the reasons alleged by the persecutors of the Society, whether in France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, or Germany, may at once be put aside, as, by the confession even of historians most strongly prejudiced against it, they are manifest fables. That the Jesuits were the instigators of the attempt of Damiens upon the life of Louis XV., or of the conspiracy attributed to the Duke of Alveira against Joseph I. of Portugal, are palpable lies which no sober man believes now. Probably no sober man ever believed them when they were first invented and instilled into the popular ear. Of equal value is Pombal's assertion, as "a certain and notorious fact," that they had arrived at a perfect

[1] Ranke remarks—"In the appendix to the memoirs of Mme. du Hausset there is an essay *De la déstruction des jésuites en France*, in which Choiseul's hatred of the Jesuits is ascribed to the circumstance of the General of the Order having given him to understand at Rome that he knew what had been said at a supper at Paris. This is a story which has been repeated in many different ways, but which has very little probability. The causes, no doubt, lay much deeper." *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. p. 139.

Digitized by Google

understanding with the English, whom they had promised to introduce into all the territories which Spain and Portugal possessed south of the line—an invention of a grandiose audacity which entitles its author to rank with Barrère. Even the charge so perseveringly urged, not without a certain show of evidence, of trading contrary to the canons, melts away under close examination.[1] To account for the overthrow of the Society by such reasons, is, as Mr. Buckle has well expressed it, "to confuse the cause of an act with the pretext under which the act is committed."[2]

Mr. Buckle further observes that the real cause of the abolition of the Jesuits was that "they obstructed the progress of mankind; they stood in the way of the age, and the age swept them from its path." Here, too, I agree with him, although I should employ quite other terms than his to describe "the way of the age," and should differ most widely from him as to the true character and ultimate goal of its progress. The real cause of the abolition of the Jesuits must be sought in the spirit of their institution. St. Ignatius arose in an age of the world when the principle of the Renaissance was sapping the authority of the Catholic Church in her rule and in her doctrine, and

[1] It is worth while to notice that the Constituent Assembly included the Jesuits in the list of those entitled to pensions on the ground that their condemnation in 1762 was unjust. See the Decree of the 19th of February, 1790.

[2] *Hist. of Civilization*, vol. ii. c. vii.

Digitized by Google

attacking her in the very centre of her unity, when, as Ranke observes,[1] "the Pope experienced opposition on every side," when, apparently, "he had nothing to expect but a lingering and progressive decline." It was then that the Society of Jesus was formed—"a Society of volunteers full of zeal and enthusiasm, with the express purpose of devoting themselves exclusively to the service of the Sovereign Pontiff," of retaining the Catholic world in his obedience, and of reducing to it the non-Catholic world. The Society was thus brought into immediate conflict not only with the development of the Renaissance principle in the spiritual sphere, but also with the Cæsarism which it introduced into the public order; that pagan idea of absolute monarchy, striving, from the first, to assert its independence of the ancient public law of Christendom, of which, in medieval times, the Vicar of Christ had been the judge: to stifle the voice of that public conscience of which he had been the keeper and witness. Hence it was that to Jesuit theologians were due those great vindications of the polity of Christendom, against the novel theories which the advocates of the immediate divine right of kings and unlimited passive obedience had devised to support the new monarchy. It was the especial glory of Suarez that he recalled to an age which was fast forgetting it, the true doctrine of Aquinas. And his teaching was, in the main, that of the Society generally,

[1] Vol. i. p. 132.

Digitized by Google

some of whose writers, indeed, in their zeal against the prevailing errors, carried it to undue lengths. It is manifest that the Jesuit theologians insisting, on the one hand, upon the supreme authority, the high prerogatives of the Pope, and the accountability to him of Christian princes; while, on the other, they laid down the limited and fiduciary character of regal power, and its derivation through the people, must have been in the highest degree distasteful to absolutist monarchs. And so in fact it was. Philip II. of Spain regarded Suarez as a Republican; the Parliament of Paris burnt his writings; the hostility of the Society to kings was a favourite commonplace of Protestants, Jansenists, and Gallicans. I am aware that particular Jesuit Fathers were the chosen spiritual advisers of monarchs who were the very type of the new Cæsarism; and that the Society itself was at times protected and favoured in the dominions of such princes. But that does not in the least affect my argument. The concern of the Jesuits with secular politics, was only, if I may so speak, accidental and by the way. Their primary object, their sole object, was religion. Except in so far as religion was involved, the external order of society, the civil polity of States, mattered not to them. The absolute sovereign was as proper an object of their ministry as the beggar or the leper; nor would they hesitate to employ their influence with the royal and the noble among their penitents for the advancement of the sacred cause to which they were devoted. Here, as elsewhere, *Ad Dei*

Digitized by Google

Majorem Gloriam was their great rule. But principles are stronger than men. And as time went on, and limitation after limitation disappeared from the royal authority, it was natural that kings should at last attack the Society, which was the standing witness of the claims of an allegiance higher than any due to the national ruler, and a perpetual testimony to the restricted character of his power. It has been remarked by M. Guizot, that if the Christian Church had not existed, the world would have been abandoned to material force. Not one of the least of the claims of the Society of Jesus upon the gratitude of mankind is that in the Renaissance epoch, when monarchs throughout Europe were labouring with ever-increasing success to assert the unbridled power of material force, it stood forth by its very constitution and rule as an obstacle and a protest. It is simple matter of fact that in the eighteenth century the Jesuits were the chief champions of the spiritual order, ever bearing witness to its claims and asserting its supremacy, and, at the last, when the battle was lost, perishing in the sacred cause to which they were faithful, even unto death.[1]

That this is the true account of the reasons which

[1] On this subject it is worth while to refer to a curious chapter in George Sand's *Histoire de Ma Vie* (the seventeenth). "L'institut des Jésuites," she writes, "renfermait implicitement ou explicitement dans le principe une doctrine de progrés et de liberté . . . Ou ne peut nier que cette secte n'ait fait faire de grand pas à l'esprit humain et qu'elle n'ait beaucoup souffert, au siècle dernier, pour le principe de la liberté intellectuelle et morale."

Digitized by Google

led the Bourbon Courts to resolve upon the destruction of the Society, I am satisfied. What I am advancing is no mere nude theory, but to draw out with any fulness the proof of it would be a long undertaking. It must suffice to cite some of the evidence which is presented by Schlosser, a hostile witness, whose testimony is of the more value, because it is given, as if in spite of himself, and with a very dim apprehension of its real value and significance. Pombal, then, he considers, "to have been raised up to organize a monarchical reign of terror," and to have been led into the "contest" with the Jesuits (the word "contest" reminds one of the poet's *si rixa est, ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum*) by his dread of them "as a dangerous independent order, with a chief dwelling at Rome, a hierarchical power beyond the reach of any secular arm."[1] He points out that the ground avowedly put forward for the abolition of the Society by the Parliament of Paris, and urged upon Louis XV. by the Duc de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour, was its incompatibility with the king's sovereign rule.[2] We read that the pedant in whose hands was the government of Naples, and whose main object was to obtain in that kingdom for the monarch, "the same rights and privileges which the Bourbons enjoyed in France,"[3] avowedly rested the justification and defence of his atrocious cruelties upon the doctrine of this immediate divine right of kings.[4] Charles III.

[1] Vol. iv. pp. 218, 219. [2] *Ibid.* p. 275. [3] *Ibid.* p. 279.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 286. The following is the language Tanucci puts

Digitized by Google

of Spain, we are told, was induced to "coincide with the French and those who supported them against the Jesuits, as the whole system of this spiritual order appeared to be completely inconsistent with the monarchical government of the eighteenth century."[1] "Thus the king, who attached as much value to autocracy as all those do who are accustomed to rule, was led to regard this religious order as a rival whose power and authority he must destroy in order to maintain his own."[2] And in another place,[3] Schlosser observes, truly enough, that in the short letter sent by the Spanish monarch to the Pope, to acquaint him with the deportation of the Jesuits, "he was formally treated with scoffing and contempt."[4] It seems to me that it must be as clear as day to the merest tyro in the history of the last century, that the persecution of the Jesuits was expressly directed against the Holy See. It was but one—the greatest indeed—of many attacks perseveringly and systematically made upon the Sovereign Pontiff by the Bourbon Courts. Two years after the accession of Clement XIII. the famous

into the mouth of his Sovereign:—"Noi, il Re, facendo uso della suprema independente potestà che riconosciamo immediatamente da Dio, unita della sua omnipotenza inseparabilmente alla nostra sovranità per il governo e regolamento dé nostri sudditi, vogliamo e commandiamo che la compagnia di Gesù sia per sempre abolita, e esclusa perpetuamento da' nostri regni delle Sicilie."

[1] *Ibid.* p. 282. [2] *Ibid.* p. 270. [3] *Ibid.* p. 285.

[4] It contains such language as the following:—"That it was deemed most suitable to send these shiploads of Jesuits to Rome, because the Pope would there have them most conveniently under his spiritual superintendence."

Digitized by Google

"family compact" had bound those Courts in strict alliance. And the ten years during which that lofty-minded and heroic Pontiff occupied, not unworthily, the Chair of Gregory VII., are filled with a succession of struggles against the lawless violence and cynical impiety of the monarchs called Most Christian and Most Catholic, and the petty tyrants of their blood who were confederate with them against the Vicar of Christ. The affair of the Duke of Parma in 1768, at the close of Clement XIII.'s reign, affords so striking and significant an instance of the determination of the House of Bourbon to reduce to utter insignificance the spiritual order, that it is worth while to recall it. The Duke, a vassal of the Holy See, had issued a Pragmatic Sanction in which, among other restrictions upon the liberties of the Church, appeals to Rome were forbidden, and all Bulls, Briefs, and other Pontifical documents brought into the duchy were declared null and void. Clement betook himself to his spiritual weapons, and issued a Brief vindicating the rights of the Apostolic See and threatening the duchy with an interdict. The Duke replied with a very insulting proclamation, assuming, as Ranke expresses it, "a tone which in the former ages the mightiest monarch would not have dared to assume;"[1] and the Ambassadors of France, Spain, Naples, and Portugal immediately demanded the recall of the Brief. Clement refused, and the four powers at once proceeded to

[1] *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. p. 143.

Digitized by Google

seize the possessions of the Church within their respective territories. Venice, Modena, and Genoa ostentatiously took part against the Pope. Tanucci publicly paraded an opinion that the Bishop of Rome was but as other bishops. The Parliament of Paris resolved in full session that the Brief against Parma was injurious to the honour and laws of all secular sovereignties and unjust. The heart of the aged Pontiff was broken. On the night of the 3rd of February he died, taken away from the evil to come. A congregation of Cardinals had been summoned for the morrow to consider instant and threatening demands presented by the French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Neapolitan Ambassadors for the formal dissolution of the Society of Jesus. The Pope knew well the significance of those demands. His complete vindication[1] of the Society remains to us: his testimony that "the body was sound, that the spirit which animated it was a spirit of purity, that its institute was without reproach, and not only without reproach, but pious, salutary, and holy: holy in its object, holy in its maxims." He knew well that it was all this and more, and that in striking at it the representatives of monarchical absolutism were striking at the Catholic Church and her earthly head. Ranke has well observed, "The party who strove to uphold the prerogatives of the Universal Church was particularly represented by the Jesuits, whose order appeared the main bulwark

[1] In his well-known letter to Charles III. of Spain.

Digitized by Google

of Ultramontane principles. Against this, therefore, the whole fury of the storm was first directed." He justly regards it as "a very striking fact," that the Holy See had not the power to uphold the Society, and does not fail to note that its fall produced "the strongest effect in Catholic countries." "The outworks being taken," he adds, "the victorious party proceeded with greater ardour to the attack of the fortress."[1]

The fall of the Society of Jesus was the culminating triumph of Renaissance Cæsarism over the spiritual order—the sweeping away of the last vestiges of liberty in Europe. The sixteen years which intervene between the promulgation of the Brief *Dominus et Redemptor Noster* and the outbreak of the French Revolution were, if I may so speak, the carnival of monarchical absolutism. Curiously enough the very forces which were blindly working to bring about its overthrow, were then most intimately leagued with it. In the attack upon the Society of Jesus the *philosophes* had been the devoted confederates of the kings.[2] In

[1] *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. pp. 203—217. D. Manuel de Rocha, Minister of Charles III., writing in 1767 to the Duc de Choiseul, to announce the expulsion of the Jesuits from Spain, observes: "Nous avons tué l'enfant; il ne nous reste plus qu'à en faire autant à la mère, notre sainte Église romaine." Crétineau-Joly, *Clément XIV. et Les Jésuites*, p. 285.

[2] D'Alembert expressed the general sentiment of the sect when he wrote—"Le plus difficile sera fait quand la philosophie sera delivrée des grands grenadiers du fanatisme et de l'intolérance (viz. the Jesuits). Les autres ne sont que des Cosaques et des Pandours qui ne tiendront pas contre nos troupes réglées.'

Digitized by Google

the continued warfare of Governments against the Church, in the attacks upon immemorial local liberties and ancient autonomies, in the determination to carry out by brute force a complete system of monarchical centralization—and this, taking Europe as a whole, is in substance the history of those fifteen years—the most effective weapons of the autocratic Powers were forged by the men who in these days,—strange irony of popular ignorance!—are so widely honoured as the apostles of freedom. Of the social, moral, and religious action of the *philosophes* I shall have to speak hereafter. Here I merely note that their direct political action was throughout Europe in support of absolutism. Fine phrases about liberty, patriotism, justice, the rights of man, were ever upon their lips: but there was no love of man or of country, no loyalty to virtue or to duty in their hearts. Their ruling motive was ever the lust of material gratification and sensual enjoyment. There was hardly one of their leaders who would not sell his pen for a chamberlain's key or a pension, to any tyrant, however steeped in nameless vice or stained by sanguinary ambition. In France, indeed, they posed as the enemies of royalty. Louis XV. disliked and despised them. Louis XVI. was too honest, or too stupid, to win their venal suffrages. Hence the French monarchy was the standing object of their vituperation—even when the monarch was doing his feeble best to use his autocratic power for the correction of its worst abuses. Vain effort, indeed, and predoomed to failure, for who could have been

Digitized by Google

sufficient for it? Certainly insufficiency[1] is written upon the career of Louis XVI. from first to last. He was not the Hercules to cleanse so foul an Augean stable as France had become. The very evils which his benevolence would have remedied were inherent parts of the system. The structure of regal absolutism was all of a piece. To attempt to reform it was but to accelerate the downfall of the edifice. Still, if any monarch ever deserved the help of all good men in his endeavours, and the pity of all generous hearts in his failures, it was Louis XVI. He received neither help nor pity from the *philosophes*.[2]

In truth the sympathies of the *philosophes* were engrossed by other European countries where the rulers were their own pupils, and where their political theories had free course and were glorified.

C'est du Nord aujourd'hui que nous vient la lumière

sang Voltaire; the North with its Gustavus III. of Sweden, and Christian VII. of Denmark, under whose usurpations every vestige of liberty disappeared from the Scandinavian peninsula; its Catharine II. of Russia, fit nursing-mother of the Church of Antichrist, who consolidated the edifice of despotism in that unhappy country. *Philosophe* principles, however, were hardly, if at all, less potential in the governments of the south of Europe than in those of the north.

[1] It is hardly necessary to recall the "Mon Dieu, aidez mon insuffisance" with which his reign opened on the 10th of May, 1774.

[2] I am speaking generally; "the virtuous Turgot" and a few others are merely the exceptions which prove the rule.

Digitized by Google

D'Aranda, who continued to be the first Minister of the Spanish Crown until the death of Charles III. in 1788, was a professed disciple of Voltaire. The sanguinary Pombal caused his works to be translated into Portuguese. The aim of these two statesmen was to bring the institutions of the countries they governed into accordance with the fashionable doctrines, and they proceeded in their task with the arbitrariness of an Oriental despot, and with a cynical indifference to the sentiments, the institutions, the traditions of the people, which few Oriental despots would dare to exhibit. This was especially the case in Spain. The ruling feelings of the noble Spanish nation were devotion to the Catholic religion, love of their ancient customary liberties, and loyalty to their prince. Their liberties had long been under an eclipse—even in the seventeenth century the Cortes had assembled but three times, and then for mere formalities—and the Church was humbled and degraded. The monarchy was left as the sole power of the State, and all its authority was used to carry out *philosophe* ideas. Recent writers—the late Mr. Buckle is conspicuous among them—have claimed that the despotism of Charles III. was at all events enlightened; that during the twenty-nine years of his absolute sway considerable material progress was made in Spain. I am by no means concerned to deny that this was so, although Mr. Buckle certainly overstates his case. Of Charles III.'s "reforms," some existed only upon paper; many were absolutely unsuited to

Digitized by Google

the genius of the people; very few permanently took root. It is incontestable that a country may attain much prosperity and splendour under a despotic government. But if any lesson is clear from history, it is this—that in the long run (to borrow the words of a great English writer) "to live by one man's will is the cause of all men's misery." Mr. Buckle justly observes, "habits of self-government, a feeling of self-reliance, are the spring and the source of all real greatness in a people." *Philosophe* legislation and administration in Spain did their best to destroy the last remains of those habits and of that feeling, already trampled under by centuries of despotism, and at the death of Charles III. they were apparently eradicated: although subsequent events indeed showed that the sacred fire still smouldered in the hearts of the people, and was capable of being fanned into a flame.[1]

[1] I must observe, before I part from Mr. Buckle, what a signal example of the doctrinaire spirit is presented in that portion of his vast undertaking which he lived to accomplish. It is hard to conceive of a wider departure from scientific method in history than that which is exhibited in his chapter on Spain. If any country stands out in medieval Europe as rich in freedom, it is this. Where else were the Commons animated by so noble a spirit of liberty as that which was extinguished at Villalar? Where shall we find so large conceptions of Constitutional Government as those embodied in such formularies as the oath of allegiance of the Cortes of Arragon:—"We, who are worth as much as you, make you our king and lord on condition that you preserve our privileges and liberties; but if not, no." The facts are all against Mr. Buckle's view. But facts are of small account with writers of his school. "Spain," he pronounces dogmatically, "had the form of liberty without its spirit; hence the form, promising as it was, soon died away." Vol. ii. c. viii.

Digitized by Google

The political condition of Italy on the eve of the French Revolution did not materially differ from that of Spain. The principles of the new French philosophy were professed by well-nigh all her rulers, and a despotism called "enlightened" generally prevailed. Tuscany was regarded as her model State, and Leopold II. was celebrated throughout the world for his "reforms." But his administration was really only a copy of the *doctrinaire* absolutism of his brother Joseph, under easier conditions and with larger success. Joseph himself is perhaps the most striking manifestation of the political tendencies of his age. Succeeding in 1780 to the sole[1] government of the confederation of States, united under the hereditary sway of the House of Hapsburg, his supreme ambition was to give the world example of a *philosophe* Kaiser. "The Emperor is quite ours," wrote Voltaire to d'Alembert, and Joseph certainly did his best to justify the boast. A contemporary observer describes him as "a *philosophe* in his opinions and a despot in his conduct."[2] Ranke pronounces his "ruling idea" to have been "to unite all the powers of the monarchy without check or limitation in his own hand."[3] Hence, both his attack upon local liberties and his policy of *doctrinaire* centralization throughout all his States, as well as "the

Mr. Buckle's volumes, the fruit of wide reading and much industry, indeed, are but chapters in a huge unfinished political pamphlet.

[1] He had for some years previously been co-regent with his mother, Maria Theresa. It was in 1765 that he became Emperor.

[2] De Ségur. *Tableau de l'Europe de* 1781 *jusqu'en* 1796.

[3] Ranke's *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. p. 147.

Digitized by Google

incessant and destructive war which he waged against all institutions calculated to uphold the external unity of the Church."[1] The systems of Government which excited his admiration[2] and his envy were those of his two accomplices in the spoliation of Poland—a crime which was consummated, it will be remembered, in the year preceding the formal suppression of the Society of Jesus, and which alone is sufficient to show how completely the ideas of morality and justice in States, of public law and international right, had been effaced from the European mind. Frederick of Prussia was avowedly his hero. He professed to be proud to call himself the scholar of so great a prince. The new Hohenzollern monarchy furnished the type according to which he sought to remodel, not only his own hereditary dominions, but also the Holy Roman Empire, of which he was the head. Happily for the future of the world, the task was beyond the power of his very mediocre capacity. The Empire, with its three hundred independent States, fifty-one

[1] Ranke's *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. p. 147.

[2] It is upon Joseph and Kaunitz that the responsibility for the complicity of Austria in this iniquity must fall: not upon the noble and pious Maria Theresa, who, as she expressed it, "alone and no longer in vigour" (Ich merkh wohl dass ich allein bin und nit mehr *en vigeur*), could only record her unavailing sorrow and indignation to see "the honour and reputation of her house thus thrown to the winds." "In this thing," she writes to Kaunitz, "where not only public law cries to Heaven against us, but also all natural justice and sound reason, I must confess never in my life to have been in such trouble, and am ashamed to show my face." See Mr. Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, Book xxi. c. iv., where the original text of the letter is given.

Digitized by Google

of them republics, was, unquestionably, a cumbrous organization. Still it preserved within it the germs of much that was precious to liberty and individuality. Nor was it doomed to be revivified after the Josephine ideal.[1] Not even within his own hereditary States were Joseph's "reforms" destined to achieve any great measure of success. Mr. Carlyle not unjustly reckons the net result of them to have been "to dislocate the Austrian edifice and have it ready for the Napoleonic earthquake which ensued."[2] "My brother the sacristan," Frederick used scoffingly to call him, for it was in ecclesiastical affairs that his energies found their fullest scope. In the Low Countries, indeed, he received a decisive check. The Netherlanders appealed against him, as their forefathers had appealed against Philip II. to their *handvests*. The *Joyeuse Entrée* was no dead letter. The estates of Flanders, Brabant, Hainault, Namur and Limbourg formally determined that by his violation of the pact which he had sworn to observe, he had, according to their ancient constitutional doctrines, lost his claim upon their allegiance. In 1789 they united, and solemnly separated themselves from his obedience. But baffled as he was here, he did much in the rest of his dominions. Ranke reckons[3] that of more than two thousand monasteries he left only seven hundred in existence. None of the societies of

[1] Joseph's schemes were effectually checked by the Fürstenbund, devised by Frederick the Great; as to which, Book xxi. c. viii. of Mr. Carlyle's *Life* of that Prince may be consulted.

[2] *Ibid.* [3] *Hist. of the Popes*, vol. iii. p. 147.

Digitized by Google

nuns, but such as could show what he called "their obvious and practical usefulness, found mercy at his hands, and even those which he spared he severed entirely from Rome; he publicly declared himself the administrator of all the secular affairs of the Church." Meanwhile the clergy were everywhere becoming ever more and more deeply imbued with the doctrines of Gallicanism and Jansenism; the authority of the Holy See was regarded with contempt, and the Church had sunk under the most severe and humiliating of tyrannies. Von Hontheim's book was "greeted throughout Europe as if it had been a new gospel:" it was, as Schlosser deems, the basis of the radical administrative reforms of Joseph.[1] In Spain and Portugal, throughout Italy, and, in spite of the official denial by the Archbishop of Paris, we may add in France, Febronianism prevailed. In the Holy Roman Empire the four great metropolitans were leagued against the Head of the Church, and openly meditated independence of him. Switzerland, the mountain home of liberty, was almost the only country still loyal to the Holy See: still submitting to the ancient discipline without repugnance, and not humiliated by the prerogatives of the Sovereign Pontiff. Absolutism had followed up the victory which it had obtained in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. The Pope, long reduced to insignificance in the political order of Europe, was now ostentatiously put aside, even in the most essential matters pertaining to the government

[1] Schlosser, vol. iv. p. 449.

Digitized by Google

of the Church. A sagacious observer, who should have judged only by appearances of the prospects of the Catholic religion, in the decade preceding the French Revolution, might well have thought it menaced by imminent destruction. If I were asked to indicate the era when the position of the Christian Church was most abject, in the well nigh two thousand years of her history, I should point to the time when the successor of the Apostle—*peregrinus apostolicus*—began those wanderings which long years after were to end so tragically, journeying humbly to the capital of the monarch whose ancestors had reckoned the title *Advocatus Ecclesiæ* among their chief glories, to sue humbly to such men as Joseph and Kaunitz, and to sue in vain.

So much must suffice as to the political phenomena of the eighteenth century in Continental Europe. Their general signification is the extinction of civil freedom, and the destruction of its best guardian and most effective guarantee, ecclesiastical liberty. Such was the ultimate development of the Renaissance idea in the public order. But the eighteenth century is an emphatically *le siècle Français* in the intellectual sphere as in the political. It may be designated, both conveniently and accurately, so far as its spiritual and moral characteristics are concerned, the age of the *philosophes*, for the school of French thinkers known by that name gave it its distinctive tone and colour.

Digitized by Google

They were everywhere read and admired, and the whole Continent was penetrated by their ideas. Other countries exercised but little influence on the world's thought. Germany may be said to have been dumb from Leibnitz to Lessing, for the voices of Spener and Semler, of Wolf and Moses Mendelssohn, were not world voices: never penetrating beyond their narrow Teutonic range, their echoes soon died away. Leibnitz and Lessing are thinkers of a very different calibre, but of them it is not necessary for me to speak. The great opponent of Locke quite failed to check the progress of the tide of Materialism, and the precursor of the *Auf-Klärung* belongs to the new school whose beginnings must indeed be referred to the last century, but whose work has been done in this, and whose way of dealing with the ultimate problems of human thought has effected in the world changes no less momentous than those wrought by the French Revolution. As to the south of Europe during the eighteenth century, it was sunk in mental torpor. Intellectually considered, Italy and Spain were a great void. England, it is true, produced a school of writers whose influence upon European thought was of the greatest moment. It was, however, through the medium of the French intellect that this influence was exercised. The doctrines dominant throughout Europe a hundred years ago may all be traced from Locke's famous *Essay*. But Europe learnt them from the English thinker's French disciples, who bettered his instruction.

Digitized by Google

The name of Locke is one of much importance in the moral and spiritual history of our race. It is not that his personal endowments, natural or acquired, were transcendently great; far from it. But they were exactly of the kind required for the work which he performed. Dry, prosaic, unimaginative, of no wide culture, and indeed of a nature not susceptible of much culture, he was admirably fitted to become the oracle of a system of metaphysics built upon that side of human nature of which alone he had knowledge, and ignoring or denying the existence of any other side. Mr. Mill reckons him the founder of "the analytical philosophy of the human mind," meaning thereby, I suppose, pretty much what was meant by d'Alembert's assertion that "he reduced metaphysics to what it ought to be, the experimental physics of the mind." So Voltaire eulogizes him as having been the first to pursue the true method in treating of the soul. Great philosophers before him, in Voltaire's judgment, had given very positive decisions on the subject; but since they knew nothing whatever about it, their conclusions were naturally widely divergent.

Tant de raisonneurs (he goes on) ayant fait le roman de l'âme, un sage est venu qui en a fait modestement l'histoire. Locke a développé à l'homme la raison humaine, comme un excellent anatomiste explique les ressorts du corps humain. Il s'aide partout par le flambeau de la physique; il ose quelquefois parler affirmativement, mais il ose aussi douter.

And again he writes:—

Locke, après avoir ruiné les idées innées, après avoir bien renoncé à la vanité de croire qu'on pense toujours, ayant bien établi que toutes

Digitized by Google

nos idées nous viennent par les sens, ayant examiné nos idées simples, celles qui sont composées, ayant suivi l'esprit de l'homme dans toutes ses opérations, ayant fait voir combien les langues que les hommes parlent sont imparfaites, et quel abus nous fesons des termes à tout moment; Locke, dis-je, considère enfin l'étendue, ou plutôt le néant des connaissances humaines. C'est dans ce chapitre qu'il ose avancer modestement ces paroles: *Nous ne serons peut-être jamais capables de connaître si un être purement matériel pense ou non.*[1]

This is the account given of Locke by the chief of the *philosophes*, with his unfailing clearness, vigour, and incisiveness. And it is in the main a true account. Personally a religious man, according to the conceptions of religion in which he had been reared, Locke must be held to be the initiator of the Materialistic movement in the ultimate phase which bolder and more logical minds worked out. No doubt earlier thinkers held many or all of the opinions which were most distinctive of him. But Locke was the first to formulate, systematize, and popularize the theory which we find in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. With him, in effect, the senses are all in all. They are not merely the windows through which the soul looks out on the external world, but the actual sources of cognition. The mind is not the active judge, but the passive recipient of their impressions. His method is purely physical, and everything in our compound nature which does not come within its scope—the immaterial, the supersensual, the mysterious—he ignores. That there is any sentient

[1] *Lettres sur les Anglais*, xiii. *Œuvres*, t. xxiv. pp. 61—62.

Digitized by Google

power in man, inherent and independent of sensation, any ἀισθήσις τῆς ψυχῆς, any *sensus intimus*, our first and surest source of knowledge, he does not understand. He puts aside those "prima principia quorum cognitio est nobis innata"[1] of which St. Thomas speaks; he knows nothing of what a grave author of his own age denominates "rational instincts," "anticipations, prenotions, or sentiments, characterized and engraven in the soul, born with it, and growing up with it."[2] These things belong to a region of our nature which he did not frequent, and he dismisses them as dreams, not understanding that, in truth, "we are such stuff as dreams are made of." And thus, the ideal and spiritual world shut off, he conceives of

[1] "Prima principia quorum cognitio est nobis innata sunt quædam similitudines increatæ veritatis, unde secundum quod per eas de aliis judicamus, dicimur judicare de rebus per rationes immutabiles vel veritatem increatam."—*De Mente*, Art. 6, ad 6m. I think it right to add that these words, which are part of an answer to an objection No. 6, taken from St. Augustine, do not fully represent St. Thomas's doctrine as it is set forth in the body of the article to which they are subjoined, and which concludes as follows:—"Scientiam a sensibilibus mens nostra accipit: nihilominus tamen ipsa anima in se similitudines rerum format in quantum per lumen intellectus agentis efficiuntur formæ a sensibilibus abstractæ intelligibiles actu, ut in intellectu possibili recipi possint. Et sic etiam in lumine intellectus agentis nobis est quodammodo omni scientia originaliter indita, mediantibus universalibus conceptionibus, quæ statim lumine intellectus agentis cognoscuntur, per quas sicut per universalia principia judicamus de aliis et ea prægnoscimus in ipsis. Et secundum hoc illa opinio veritatem habet, quæ ponit nos ea quæ addiscimus ante in notitia habuisse."

[2] Sir Matthew Hale's *Primitive Origination of Mankind*, p. 66, a book which, however antiquated in many parts, deserves a better fate than the oblivion into which it has fallen.

Digitized by Google

man as an animal endowed with a memory of appearances and facts, and from that point of view unfolds his theory of the human understanding. He is the Aquinas of *Renaissance* thought. Nor could the radical change which had come over the European mind be better illustrated than by a comparison between the founder of the school of experimental psychologists and the Angelic Doctor.

Locke's application of his own method was partial and inconsistent. In France, it was carried with ruthless logic to its necessary consequences, and thence it penetrated the European mind. The wide difference between the tone of French speculation in the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth is very striking. In the former the Cartesian influence is predominant, and philosophy is essentially metaphysical and idealistic. In the latter it is essentially naturalistic and materialistic. And to Locke this change is mainly due. The *philosophes* of the eighteenth century were doubtless to some extent influenced by earlier writers of their own country, and especially by Montaigne and Bayle: but Locke was their great master, as they were never tired of confessing. The only difference between him and those of them whose teaching would have filled him with the most dismay, is that he less consistently expounds his own principles. For Locke, man is still a being endowed with reflection and sensibility, and although he reckons passive sensation the common source of our ideas, he judges that the mind is the

Digitized by Google

chief agent in their development. Before a hundred years have passed away, Condillac, taxing him with inexactness—because reflection on his own showing is nothing, in its principle, but sensation itself, and because it is less a source of ideas than a canal through which they flow from sense—boldly reduces all our knowledge to sensation. Condillac does indeed maintain in theory a distinction between soul and body; but he holds that sensation envelops all the faculties of the soul, that the judgment, reflection, the passions, are only sensation transforming itself. It is, therefore, obviously, but a short and a natural step from his teaching to that of St. Lambert, that man is "une masse organisée et sensible qui reçoit l'esprit de tout qui l'environne, et de ses besoins," and to the unadorned materialism of Cabanis, who makes of thought a secretion of the brain. Thus mind disappears in matter, and the doctrine refuted by the lips of the dying Socrates, that the soul is the result of the corporeal organization, reappears as the last word of the Lockian ideology. Such is, in fact, and as matter of history, the issue of the great sensualistic negation of the eighteenth century, and we can trace accurately its course in the manifold forms which it assumed from its first formulation to its final resolution. Thus we have the cynical Deism of Voltaire, the coarse Pantheism of Diderot, the sentimental religiosity of Rousseau, the swinish Naturalism of Holbach, the full-fed Atheism of Helvétius, and many other developments which it

Digitized by Google

would be tedious to catalogue. But in all worketh one and the selfsame spirit: all are the offspring of a way of thinking originally derived from Locke, either directly or through the school of English Deists which he unwittingly founded. The *philosophes* are all of one stock and bear an unmistakable family likeness.

The greatest names of the *philosophe* sect are confessedly those of Voltaire and Rousseau. The thought of the eighteenth century, in the form in which it most potently affected the world, is summed up in these two men. Let us consider them a little. Let us see what their message to the human race was: what were the causes why it had such free course and was glorified: and what were its practical fruits. And first, as to Voltaire, supreme literary excellence must, I suppose, on all hands be conceded to him. He knew exactly what he meant; he knew the words which could most perspicuously convey his meaning; and he knew, by the happy instinct of genius, the most effective way in which to dispose and order them. There is no French like his in its incisive clearness, its perfect polish, its exhilarating grace. Casting about for similitudes, one might compare it to a bright flashing Damascus blade in the hands of a consummate master of fence: it is as hard, as sparkling, as a diamond of the purest ray: it is like "the foaming grape of Eastern France" with delicate bubbles dancing airily in the glass, and subtle fumes ascending to the brain and stealing away the judgment.

Digitized by Google

But if we go on from his style to his thought, we discover that one secret of his power is the simplicity of his doctrine. It may be said of him, as he said of his master Locke, "he has no great possessions," "but his substance," such as it is, "is well assured." His lucidity is due, in great measure, to his tenuity. He is not hampered by that sentiment of the infinite which is at the root of religion, heroism, and, in the high sense of the word, poetry. He has one and only one test of truth. Can the thing of which there is question be seen, tasted, handled? "Sworn foe to mystery," he holds the supernatural as mere priestcraft, and looks upon the supersensual as an idle tale. Hence Christianity, as being the great system of spirtualism, and as being ostensibly in possession of the world's intellect, is the object pursued by him with unremitting enmity throughout his long life. It is the *Infâme* which he attacks with every weapon available to him, from the pamphlet to the folio, from the epigram to the sophism. In Voltaire we have the logical development, with supreme skill, of the idea which is of the essence of Protestantism. Mr. John Morley has observed, and justly, that through him, "the free and protesting genius of the Reformation," "late and changed, but directly of descent," "made its decisive entry into France."[1] His negations go further than those of the sixteenth century, further than those of Locke;

[1] Morley's *Voltaire*, p. 66.

Digitized by Google

but they are identically the same in principle.[1] He appeals to the private judgment as the supreme arbiter, and holds the individual intellect bound to dismiss contemptuously all that it cannot master. He will not hear of any logic of the affections: of those reasons of the heart which the reason knows not, he is ever the bitter mocker. Again, reason, whose chief office the wisdom of the ancient world held to be the subduing of the passions, he regards merely as a weapon wherewith to combat superstitions. And by superstitions he means not only all religious beliefs, hopes, emotions, but all thoughts which transcend the seen and actual, all that concerns itself with the immaterial side of man's nature. He holds metaphysics in hardly less contempt than theology:

> —ces beaux esprits dont le savant caprice,
> D'un monde imaginaire a bâti l'édifice,[2]

[1] This has been clearly pointed out by Comte, in the fifth volume of his *Cours de Philosophie Positive*. "C'est ce que la raison publique a depuis longtemps essentiellement reconnu, d'une manière implicite mais irrécusable, en consacrant d'un aveu unanime, la dénomination très expressive de protestantisme, qui, bien que restreinte ordinairement au premier état d'une telle doctrine, ne convient pas moins, au fond, à l'ensemble total de la philosophie révolutionnaire. En effet, cette philosophie, depuis le simple luthéranisme primitif, jusqu'au déisme du siècle dernier, et sans même excepter ce qu'on nomme l'athéisme systématique, qui en constitue la plus extrême phase, n'a jamais pu être historiquement qu'une protestation croissante et de plus en plus méthodique contre les bases intellectuelles de l'ancien ordre social, ultérieuremeut étendue, par une suite nécessaire de sa nature absolue, à toute véritable organisation quelconque."—p. 540.

[2] *Les Systèmes*, *Œuvres*, t. xii. p. 204. This short poem appears to me to be an epitome of Voltaire's mind. A most instructive parallel

Digitized by Google

are the objects of his unceasing and indiscriminating attacks. In some instances he quite fails to comprehend even the alphabets of their systems. Within certain limits his vision was superlatively clear, but those limits were narrow, and his favourite device is to mask his intellectual shortsightedness by an assumption of contempt for what is unknown to him. He possessed in perfection the art of exhibiting the things which he did not understand, as unworthy of being understood. Take the verses in which he accumulates his flouts and gibes upon Spinoza:—

> Alors ûn petit Juif, au long nez, au teint blême,
> Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,
> Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,
> Caché sous le manteau de Descartes son mâitre,
> Marchant à pas comptés, s'approcha du Grand Être:
> "Pardonnez-moi, dit-il, en lui parlant tout bas,
> Mais je pense, entre nous, que vous n'existez pas." [1]

What can be wittier than the picture here drawn of this great genius and his philosophy? What more ignorant? Whatever opinion we may form of Spinoza, certainly nothing can be more erroneous than the view which represents as an atheist "this God-intoxicated man,"—so Novalis calls him,—"the writer who, more than any one else, resembles the

might be drawn between this embodiment of *persiflage* and the terrible verses on the Last Judgment, belonging to the same age, into which a far profounder genius seems to have emptied all the *sæva indignatio* of his lacerated heart.

[1] *Les Systèmes*, ubi supra.

Digitized by Google

unknown author of the *Imitation*," in Cousin's judgment. The truth is that Spinoza lived in heights far above, out of Voltaire's sight, who could only conclude that " he did not recognize any God, and merely made use of the word in order not to frighten people." It is an eminently characteristic conclusion, and is, in itself, a revelation of the mind which arrived at it. Not less valuable from this point of view are Voltaire's notes on Pascal. Maine de Biran justly observes that they might have been expressly written to expose the littleness, the wretchedness, the puerility of the writer's system, and to bring into strong relief the elevation and greatness of a philosophy opposed to that of sensation. And he forcibly remarks :—

Voulez-vous trouver un exemple frappant du contraste qui'l y a entre le caractère grave, sérieux et méditatif qui appartient au beau siècle de la philosophie en France, et le ton léger, frivole, cavalier, qui caractérise le siècle de l'irreflexion? Lisez l'article 6 des Pensées de Pascal § 5 et la note de Voltaire,[1] qui ne conçoit pas ce qui est la pensée, et comme elle constitue toute la dignité humaine. Cela est curieux et instructif pour l'histoire de la philosophie.[2]

It is most curious and instructive, for it is a fair specimen of the thinker, whose influence was predominant over the European mind in the last century.

[1] L'homme n'est qu'un roseau le plus faible de la nature; mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parcequ'il sait qu'il meurt, et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien (Pascal).—En quoi quelques idées reçues dans un cerveau sont-elles préférables à l'univers matériel? (Voltaire.)

[2] Maine de Biran, *Sa Vie at ses Pensées*, p. 194.

Digitized by Google

Next to Voltaire, Rousseau undoubtedly fills the chief place among the *philosophes*. In mental constitution, in personal character, in tastes, temper, method, and style, as in the accidents of life, the two men were very far apart. But they have this in common, that they both represent the same idea. I spoke of Rousseau's system just now as "sentimental religiosity," and I used the expression advisedly. It is his hereditary Genevan Calvinism, with its dogmatic element eliminated, and nothing but the emotion left. The substance of Rousseau's teaching, as of Voltaire's, is the assertion of the self-sufficiency of the individual man in the order of thought and in the order of action. This is the great principle which underlies all Rousseau's speculations. Hence, no less than Voltaire, he is the foe of Christian doctrines and mysteries, the uncompromising enemy of the cult, the ministers, the institutions of the Catholic Church. The very able writer to whom the world is indebted for the most recent biography of him, claims, indeed, for his scepticism a great superiority over Voltaire's, as being a far more powerful solvent of dogma. "The latter," says Mr. Morley, "only revolted and irritated all serious temperaments, to whom religion is a matter of honest concern; while the former actually appealed to their religious sense in support of his doubts, and the more intelligent and sincere this sense happened to be, the more surely would Rousseau's gravely urged objections dissolve the hard particles of dogmatic belief." His objections, Mr. Morley is pleased to add, "were on a moral

Digitized by Google

level with the best side of the religion that they oppugned; those of Voltaire were only on a level with its lowest side."[1] Comparisons of this kind which occur, now and then, in Mr. Morley's writings, induce a doubt whether his conceptions of Christianity are not largely derived at second-hand through its assailants, who have found in him so thorough-going an apologist. Still, the passage which I have just quoted no doubt contains a truth. Voltaire's biting sarcasm appealed chiefly to the more superficial, unreflecting, and corrupt, in an age of which superficiality, irreflection, and corruption were the chief notes. Rousseau's sentimentalism at least "did not revolt moral sense; it did not afflict the firmness of intelligence, nor did it silence the diviner melodies of the soul."[2] In the melancholy philosopher of Geneva we have the "sober brow" spoken of by the poet, which no "damnéd error" ever lacks, ready to

> bless it and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament.

The reactionary guise which his teaching wore, only served to render it more effectively iconoclastic. His writings, their essentially naturalistic character veiled by a turbid and inconsequent spiritualism, appeared when the time of Voltaire's greatest activity was over; and "souls weary of the fierce mockeries, that had so long been flying like fiery shafts against the far Jehovah of the Hebrews, and the silent Christ

[1] Morley's *Rousseau*, p. 409. [2] *Ibid.* p. 404.

Digitized by Google

of the later doctors and dignitaries, and weary too of the orthodox demonstrations that did not demonstrate, and leaden refutations that did not refute, may well have turned"[1] longingly to this new Gospel. A "new Gospel" indeed, of the kind of which the Apostle speaks—aliud Evangelium quod non est aliud; no Revelation from on high, but the fantasy of a diseased heart and a troubled conscience, a creation as hollow and unsubstantial as that which the Goddess of Dulness devised when

> empty words she gave, and sounding strain,
> But senseless, lifeless, idol void and vain!

No doubt there was an element of intense reality about Rousseau's writings which principally contributed to their vast influence. But that element, if we narrowly examine it, is egotism of a quite portentous kind. No man probably was ever "sick of self-love" to the same degree. Whether we consider his political or religious speculations, the central figure is everywhere Jean Jacques Rousseau. But even in this he is but "falsely true." It is not the real Jean Jacques whom we see, as he existed in the world, "a moral dwarf mounted on stilts,"[2]

[1] Morley's *Rousseau*, p. 403.

[2] "Un nain moral monté sur des échasses." It was Madame d'Épinay's judgment of him. Voltaire's, as appears from numerous passages in his correspondence, was much more severe. Take, as a sample of them, the following which occurs in a letter to the Comte de Rochefort, dated 29th October, 1766. "Ce Jean-Jacques me paraît un charlatan fort au-dessus de ceux qui jouent sur les boulevards. C'est une âme pétrie de boue et de fiel qui mériterait la haine s'il n'était par accablé du plus profond mépris."

Digitized by Google

his enthusiasm of humanity largely tempered by vanity, irritability, selfishness, mendacity, pruriency, cowardice, and suspicion: but a quite transcendental Jean Jacques, highly exemplary[1] and altogether philanthropic,

> lecturing all mankind
> On the soft passion and the taste refined,

pointing an afflicted world forward to a visionary new heaven and new earth, wherein dwell a shadowy *Être Suprême* and the *Contrat Social*, or backward to an equally visionary "state of nature." I shall have again to touch upon Rousseau's attempts at construction. At present I would merely point out that, wholly illusory as they were, they did much to accelerate the downfall of the old order. In his zeal to clear the ground for his projected Temple of Humanity, and to possess himself of such fragments of the existing religious and social structure as he judged might with advantage be built therein, he was no less ruinous than Voltaire, whose "rage to overthrow without rebuilding" was the constant theme of his complaints. It may be truly said of him: "Nothing is more imperfect than his way of thought. It is empty, superficial, mocking, dissolvent, good to destroy and nothing more. There is neither depth in it, nor height, nor unity, nor future; nothing capable of serving as a foundation

[1] See the curious passage at the beginning of the *Confessions*, where he challenges all the human race to produce any one who can truly say, "je fus meilleur que cet homme-là."

Digitized by Google

or as a bond." It was not of Rousseau, but of Voltaire, that Rivarol wrote these words: they are, however, as applicable to the one as to the other. More, they are truly descriptive of the whole sect of the *philosophes*. Negation is the substance of their teaching; it is nothing but a negation of the past, present, and future of the human race.

Such was the philosophy which possessed itself in the eighteenth century of the intellect of France, and diffused itself from Paris through the whole of Europe. The *philosophes* anticipated, after their manner, the victories of the future Revolutionary hosts, and if we weigh the matter well, their triumphs are far more wonderful than those of Napoleon. It is one of the most striking phenomena in history that a doctrine so flimsy, logic so shallow, conceptions so mean, should have been everywhere received as though they were self-evident and irrefragable truth. The "esprit infini" of Voltaire, the literary excellences, long below his, it is true, but yet very considerable, of Rousseau, Diderot, Helvétius, Grimm, are quite insufficient to account for the success of the *philosophes*. It is only upon considering the moral and religious state of France when the sect arose that we find, I do not say a complete revelation of the causes which enabled it to work so great an intellectual and spiritual revolution, but at all events clear and decisive indications of them.

It is beyond question that the decay so conspicuously exhibited in the public order of France

Digitized by Google

during the last quarter of a century of Louis XIV.'s reign, extended to every department of life. The decadence, socially and religiously, was just as great as it was politically, and may in large measure be attributed to the same cause. The supreme arrogance of the Cæsarism which sought to merge all individuality, all power, in its own greatness, exercised a fatal influence alike upon the domestic virtues, and upon the religious institutions of the country. It is not easy to overrate the corrupting effect produced upon the nation at large by the brilliant Court which ministered at Versailles to the pride of the monarch. The representatives of the great families of France were withdrawn from the duties which are best fitted to form a manly character, to the enervating and debasing career of courtier life. It was a life led under the control of an etiquette as oppressive as military discipline, but void of all that gives value to military discipline, and compensates for the surrender of individuality and personal freedom. Nor was the mischief confined to those who were most directly and immediately affected, for the influence and example of the Court were of potent operation throughout the country. It may be truly said,

> Hoc fonte derivata clades
> In patriam populumque fluxit.

That *relâchement des mœurs* which is so signal a characteristic of the eighteenth century may be traced directly to this source. And behind the veil of decent

Digitized by Google

hypocrisy which hangs over the last years of Louis XIV., only too abundant evidence may be found, how far the relaxation had proceeded before that monarch passed away.

The Cæsarism of Louis XIV. was of even more disastrous operation in the religious sphere. Whether we consider it as manifested in his treatment of Protestantism, of Jansenism, or of the Holy See, it was fraught with the direst evils. The effect of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and of the dragonnades—not to speak of their baneful influence upon the position of Catholics in this and other countries—was to galvanize for a brief time into new life the older forms of Protestantism, and to send the clergy of France to confront the age of Voltaire and Rousseau, defiled by the stains of blood and the taint of the charnel-house. Jansenism again was persecuted with a severity which was no less unwise. The more profound our conviction of the mischief inherent in a system which was in fact disguised fatalism, the more lamentable will appear the policy which made martyrs of those who had embraced that unlovely creed, and which attracted towards it the sympathies of the enemies of Absolutism. The truth is that here, as in his monstrous cruelties towards the Protestants, Louis XIV. was in the main animated by his overmastering egotism. It was, as I have already observed, "the king's religion" which Louis attempted to dragoon into his Huguenot subjects, and his chief objection to the Jansenists was grounded upon the

Digitized by Google

supposed republican tendency of their doctrine: "le vrai Janséniste," it was said, "ne relève que de Dieu." So too in his contests with the Holy See, the ambition of the French monarch was to arrogate to himself a supremacy not very unlike that which Henry VIII. attained in this country. Not only was the king's religion to be accepted by all men, but all men's religion was to be the king's. Louis XIV.'s ecclesiastical policy was all of a piece, and his severities against the Jansenist and Protestant dissidents were closely connected with the Gallican revolt against the Supreme Pastor. They were, in fact, the bribe offered to the clergy to betray to the civil power the Vicar of Christ. And the bribe was accepted. The Four Articles were the price of blood. The effect of an alliance with Absolutism, effected upon such conditions, was fatal to the position of the spiritualty in France. From the baptism of Clovis until the seventeenth century was far advanced, the French Church had been the most popular of the institutions of the country. And she had merited her popularity. For she had been the pioneer of progress, the nurse of nationality, the champion of conscience, the fosterer of freedom, and the protector of the poor. "Whole in herself, a common good," her devotion to the Holy See had been the condition and the bulwark of her independence. With her loyalty to Rome that independence vanished, and with it her popular power vanished too. A century passed away before the ecclesiastical order reaped in the civil constitution of

Digitized by Google

the clergy the full harvest which they had sown in their acceptance of the Four Articles: before they themselves experienced the application of the law which they had rashly sanctioned against themselves in their exultation at the confiscation of the Protestant Consistories. Their history during the whole of that interval is a history of ever-increasing decadence. Even before the death of Louis XIV. that decadence had gone very far; the moral and intellectual guidance of the country had slipped from their grasp, and religion shared in the contempt which had fallen upon its ministers. St. Simon tells us in his *Mémoires* that when the Duke of Orléans was setting out for Spain to join the Duke of Berwick the King asked him whom he proposed to take with him. Among others the Duke named M. de Fonterpuis. "What, my nephew!" exclaimed the King, much moved; "the son of that mad woman who was for ever running after M. Arnauld! a Jansenist!" "Nay, sire," replied the duke, "he does not believe in God at all." "Is it possible?" the King said. "Do you really tell me that? Well, if that is the case, there is no great harm. Take him by all means."[1] "On en rit fort à la cour et à la ville," adds St. Simon. It has been truly observed that in those laughs of the court and of the town we have the whole spirit of the eighteenth century in germ.

The death of Louis XIV. was the signal for the open manifestation of this spirit to the world. It is

[1] *Mémoires du Duc de Saint Simon*, t. v. p. 349.

Digitized by Google

not necessary to dwell upon the gross profligacy and cynical impiety which have made the period of the Regency proverbial for license and blasphemy. We read in the[1] introduction to Madame du Hausset's *Mémoires* how in ten years a change of two centuries seemed to have come over France: how a torrent of ridicule was poured upon devotion and the devout: how the most scandalous occurrences excited no surprise. It was then that the sect, of which Voltaire may be reckoned the chief, arose to provide a philosophy

[1] La différence, à l'égard de la pratique de la religion, durant le règne de Louis XIV. et celui de son successeur, quoique frappante, n'a pas été peut-être assez sentie. Pendant le premier, il ne meurt, ni personnage important, ni homme célèbre quelconque, qu'on ne cite la manière plus ou moins édifiante dont il a fini. La réconciliation d'un mourant avec l'Église, et son repentir, semblent consoler ses amis de sa perte. *La Fontaine* déclare, en présence de plusieurs membres de l'Académie française qui, à sa prière, s'étaient rendus chez-lui, son extrême repentir du scandale qu'il avait donné par ses contes; et après sa mort, on le trouva revêtu d'un cilice qu'il portait depuis longtemps. Racine, dans ses dernières années, ne paraît occupé que de pratiques religieuses et d'exercices de piété; il renonçait la veille des grandes fêtes, à toute occupation, à toute affaire. On voit encore, dans les lettres que j'ai citées, comme dans d'autres, combien les prédicateurs étaient suivis et les livres de dévotion recherchés. Sous la régence, le ridicule fut versé à pleines mains sur les dévots et la dévotion; et il semblait, dix ans après la mort de Louis XIV., qu'il y eût deux siècles entre son règne et celui de Louis XV., du moins quant à la religion. Les lettres de Mademoiselle Ayssé, réimprimées en 1805, contiennent des anecdotes assez curieuses, et donnent une juste idée des mœurs pendant la régence. Elles étaient devenues tellement désordonnées, que les événements les plus scandaleux semblaient ne pas étonner les contemporains. *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.* Int. p. 9. The writer goes on to give some curious specimens of these "événements scandaleux."

Digitized by Google

congruous with the spirit of the age; and in the doctrine of Locke he found a suitable foundation for it. Man in his deepest degradation is ever willing to justify himself; to fit to his practice a theory of life. To the French society of this epoch, a method which dealt with man as a wholly sensual being, which denied the God whom it had ceased to honour, the supernatural voice of conscience to which it had grown deaf, the moral law to which even the tribute of hypocrisy was no longer paid, was supremely grateful. "Les passions sont athées" is a true saying, whoever said it: they darken the spiritual intuitions and religious instincts of man's nature. Voltaire, with his experimental psychology, taught men to laugh at those instincts and intuitions. And it was in that guise of *persiflage* that the philosophy of sensation came to France. Its political tendencies did not appear until much later. It is quite clear that Voltaire was no revolutionist, in the sense of deliberately wishing and intending to bring about the overthrow of the public order as it existed. Although "gaudens popularibus auris," there was nothing of the demagogue about him. He did not write for lacqueys or for the mob, as he contemptuously announced, and there are few more curious instances of the irony of events than his quasi-canonization by the *profanum vulgus* whom he ever hated and kept at a distance. "Voltairism," remarks Mr. Morley, "was primarily and directly altogether an intellectual movement, for this reason, that it was primarily and directly a reaction against the subordination of the

Digitized by Google

intellectual to the moral side of man."[1] It is as true as it is tersely put. And it was precisely because the new philosophy presented itself in such an aspect, making the individual reason, which, in practice, is apt to mean the individual appetite, the sole rule of life, that it won so ready a reception among men weary of "creeds that refuse and restrain."

The spirit of the age, then, whose "dull sound of subterranean impiety," long before it mixed itself with life, had fallen upon the keenly attuned ears of Bossuet, and filled the prescient genius of Pascal with those vague alarms which betray themselves in the febrile uneasiness of his writings, received from Voltaire its formulation and logical embodiment. In his hand it became a tremendous weapon which there was nothing left in France to resist. There arose none like unto Bossuet and Pascal among their discredited and degenerate successors. The clergy who were confronted with the new philosophy were as sleepers upon the walls of the spiritual city of which they were the watchmen, unconscious of the hosts gathered together for its overthrow: and if they dimly awake from time to time to an apprehension of peril, they display an utter inability to discern the course of the century and the signs of the times. Their only resource is in the secular power. In reversal of the Apostolic word, it may be said that the weapons of their warfare are not spiritual but

[1] Morley's *Voltaire*, p 25.

Digitized by Google

carnal, and impotent to the pulling down of strongholds. There was hardly one of their General Assemblies during the reigns of Louis XV. and Louis XVI. in which demands for fresh severities against dissidents were not addressed by them to the king; demands mingled with servile adulation of the monarch, and constant iteration of the Gallican doctrine of his absolute and immediate divine right. At the same time their tone towards the Supreme Pastor is in the highest degree arrogant and disloyal, while their practical disregard of him is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that the great liturgical revolution of 1738 was effected without one word of reference to Rome. Meanwhile fresh fetters are heaped upon them by the civil power. As though the interdiction of their assemblies without the royal license, the prohibition of correspondence between Bishops and the Apostolic See, the multiplication of *appels comme d'abus*, the requirement of the registration of Bulls by the Council of State, the control of Episcopal *Mandements*, were not sufficient infringements of ecclesiastical liberty, the constant endeavour of the Parliaments throughout the century is to reduce the spiritualty to entire submission and to the lowest depth of humiliation. It is not necessary for me to follow the deadly conflicts between the great judicial corporations and the clergy, which are so marked a feature of the reign of Louis XV., and the true bearing of which upon the public order appears to have been discerned by that monarch, through the "solid darkness" which

Digitized by Google

encompassed his soul.[1] I am here merely concerned to point out how the pretensions of the Parliaments to regulate the administration of the Sacraments under pain of the galleys, to suppress or burn Papal and Episcopal documents treating of purely doctrinal matters, to revise the list of General Councils, and to sit in judgment upon canonized saints,[2] afforded infinite matter for the sneers of the *philosophes*, and vastly added to the ever-increasing discredit of religion. One great cause of that discredit lay in the hierarchy itself. The abbeys and bishoprics of the Church were filled chiefly with courtiers, often of scandalous lives, who had succeeded in winning the good graces of a minister or a mistress, and who were

[1] Mme. du Hausset in her *Mémoires* relates the following scene: —"Un jour, le *maître* (Louis XV.) entra tout échauffé. Je me retirai, mais j'écoutai dans mon poste. Qu'avez-vous? lui dit *Madame* (Mme. de Pompadour).—Ces grandes robes et le clergé, répondit-il, sont toujours aux couteaux tirés; ils me désolent par leurs querelles; mais je déteste bien plus les grandes robes. Mon clergé, au fond, m'est attaché et fidèle; les autres voudraient me mettre en tutelle.—La fermeté, lui dit Madame, peut seule les réduire.—Robert de Saint-Vincent est un boute-feu que je voudrais pouvoir exiler, mais ce sera un train terrible. D'un autre côté, l'archevêque est une tête de fer qui cherche querelle. . . . . M. de Gontaut entra. Le roi se promenait agité; puis tout d'un coup il dit:—Le régent a eu bien tort de leur rendre le droit de faire des remonstrances; ils finiront par perdre l'État.—Ah! Sire, dit M. de Gontaut, il est bien fort pour que de petits robins puissent l'ébranler.—Vous ne savez ce qu'ils font et ce qu'ils pensent, reprit le roi: c'est une assemblée de républicains. En voilà au reste assez; les choses comme elles sont dureront autant que moi." p. 93.

[2] The Parliament of Paris excluded from the list of General Councils those of Florence and the Fifth Lateran, and struck out from the Calendar the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul.

Digitized by Google

usually as eager to shirk the duties as to obtain the temporalities of their preferments. The story is well known of the great noble who, when appointing a chaplain, observed, "By the way, it may be as well to mention that I never hear Mass." To which the divine replied, "That is fortunate, for I never say it." The parochial clergy shared in the prevailing degeneracy. They were for the most part, it is true, of blameless conduct, but they were seldom men of solid learning, or active zeal, or a spirit ecclesiastical. As to the religious orders, there is an immense amount of evidence which establishes only too clearly the deplorable relaxation of their discipline,[1] the Trappists, Cistercians, and Jesuits being, indeed, bright exceptions. Such were the accredited defenders of the faith in the eighteenth century; and, in truth, they were only a little less infected than their opponents by the new philosophy. They had drunk deeply into that dry, analytical, sensualistic spirit of the age which they were called upon to resist. Not only in France, but throughout Europe, the supersensual character of Christianity seems to have been forgotten by its teachers: its mysteries are spoken of, if at all, apologetically and with bated breath: its dogmas are veiled: its essential mission as a manifestation of the

[1] Things went on growing steadily worse, up to the outbreak of the French Revolution. As an example of what they had come to, thirteen years before that event, I may mention a petition addressed to the king in 1765 by twenty-eight Benedictine monks of St. Germain des Près, praying to be released from the obligation of saying the night office, of abstaining from flesh, and of wearing their habit.

Digitized by Google

supernatural, ignored: materialism has invaded the very citadel of the most spiritual of religions. Theology loses itself in evidences which, it may be safely affirmed, never carried conviction to any human soul. We look in vain for any large philosophic conception of religion, for any apprehension of the irrefragable foundation which, as Pascal had shown, it possesses in our spiritual intuitions and in the wants of human nature; nay, even for any appreciation of it as the great historical fact of the modern world. These things are no more to be found in the defenders of Christianity than in its adversaries. It is curious and significant how the favourite ground chosen by Voltaire is tacitly accepted by his opponents. Half his attacks are directed against a doctrine of the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, which is, indeed, essential to the old "orthodox" Protestantism, but which has no sanction from the Catholic Church—nay, more, which is in truth quite out of harmony with her system. The upholders of Christianity, however, Catholic and Protestant alike, with scarcely an exception, take their stand upon the letter of those venerable documents of the faith, and, it must be owned, are in most cases ignominiously discomfited. The *philosophes* succeeded through the moral, intellectual, and spiritual weakness of their adversaries far more than through their own strength. In truth, the position of the clergy throughout the century is rather that of a victim than that of a combatant; and Voltaire turned in contempt from them to the

Digitized by Google

giant[1] (as he termed him) of an elder generation, in whom at all events he recognized a worthier adversary. M. Sainte-Beuve has observed,[2] and I believe correctly, that among the French clergy not one was found to answer the attack upon the *Pensées*. Comment would only dull the significance of such a fact.

Thus much in elucidation of the easy victory achieved by the Renaissance philosophical idea, in its ultimate development, over the intellect of France. Let us consider a little its practical fruits. The inquiry is not of merely bygone interest. History ought to be what the trite old saying affirms it is, philosophy teaching by example. And here we have, in fact, the materials for the answer to the question so widely discussed among us, in every variety of key :— Eliminate the Christian religion from a society which has been penetrated by it, and is life worth living ? It is worthy of note that the *philosophe* doctrine is in all essentials at one with the Positivism of the present day. That we do not know, and that no one knows, whether there is an invisible world or not ; that it

[1] Voltaire writes to Formont in 1734 :—" Il y a longtemps que j'ai envie de combattre ce géant." M. Sainte-Beuve remarks : " Voltaire comprit que Pascal était le grand rival qui gênait la philosophie, et il l'attaqua de front. Pourquoi alla-t-il s' attaquer à Pascal plutôt qu'à Bossuet ou à tout autre ? Voilà, selon moi, l'honneur singulier de Pascal et la preuve qu'il est au cœur du Christianisme même."

[2] *Port Royal*, t. iii. p. 322. M. Sainte-Beuve says that the only champion who entered the lists with Voltaire in defence of the author of the *Pensées* was one Boullier, a Protestant, whose work I have not seen. Sainte-Beuve credits it with vigour and gravity.

Digitized by Google

is mere waste of time to think about it; that all religions and all metaphysics are chimerical and vain; that the only possible science is that of the physical world, its facts and its laws—such were the doctrines dominant in France a hundred years ago, not only in the upper classes of society among whom they were at first diffused, but throughout the intellect of the country. What, as a matter of fact, was the practical outcome of these doctrines?

I suppose we may take it, as Mr. Carlyle says, that "a man's religion is the chief fact about him: a man's or a nation of men's. . . . . The thing a man does practically believe . . . . concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destinies there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his *religion*, or it may be his mere scepticism and *no religion*: the manner in which he feels himself to be related to the Unseen World or No World."[1] Now looking at the France of a hundred years ago, when *philosophism* had had its perfect work, we find the teaching of Rousseau on this matter predominant. The destroyer Voltaire had done his part. Rousseau was to create—to make all things new. The task before him was to preserve religion as a sentiment, while rejecting it as a system. And he set himself to this task with indubitable earnestness. He was well aware of the existence of that in man which was hidden from the eyes of most

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, Lect. i.

Digitized by Google

of the *philosophes*. The religious aspirations and affections which they derided as mere illusions and fables were for him an integral part of our nature, the necessary foundation of all morality, the only stable basis of the public order.[1] Nay, sometimes he quite outstrips the bounds of the experimental philosophy in his inconsequent ardour, and insists upon the existence of God, the spirituality of the soul, and a future life, as "incontestable verities and sacred dogmas." And in a remarkable passage of the *Émile*, inveighing against the scepticism which he describes, truly enough, as a hundred times more affirmative and dogmatic than the teaching which proceeded from its adversaries, he denounces those who, under the lofty pretext of enlightenment, take from the wretched the last consolation of their misery, from the powerful and rich the only curb of their passions: who tear out from men's hearts the remorse of crime, the hope of virtue, and yet vaunt themselves the benefactors of the human race.[2] Never had Deism such a prophet; and men tried hard to believe him, but they could not. Faith is, after all, an intellectual act, and the intellect could not lay

[1] In his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les Spectacles*, he writes: "Je n'entends pas qu'on puisse être vertueux sans religion; j'eus longtemps cette opinion trompeuse, dont je suis bien désabusé." And in the *Contrat Social* (l. iv. c. viii.): "Jamais état ne fut fondé que la religion ne lui servît de base."

[2] This passage occurs in the Fourth Book of the *Émile*, towards the end of the Savoyard Vicar's "Profession of Faith."

Digitized by Google

hold of his fugitive dreams. Mr. Morley well characterizes his teaching as—

> cold and inanimate, in its essence a doctrine of self-complacent individualism, from which society has little to hope, and with which there is little chance of the bulk of society ever sympathizing. The common people [he justly adds] are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find atheism a rather better synthesis than any other. They either cling to the miraculously transmitted message with its hopes of recompense, and its daily communication of the divine voice in prayer and sacrament, or else they make a world which moves through space as a black monstrous ship with no steersman.[1]

As a matter of fact we have the practical outcome of Rousseau's Deism, a very few years later, in the Fête of the *Être Suprême*, with his disciple Robespierre as ministering High Priest, and in the worship of the Goddess of Reason symbolized, apt emblem! by a naked prostitute. It was the most notable attempt at construction in the religious domain made by the *philosophes*. Construction, indeed, is no part of the work of what Mr. Mill calls "the analytical philosophy of the human mind." Profoundly true is the observation of Maine de Biran :—

> La sentiment de l'infini est identique au sentiment religieux, ou il en est la base. . . . . Dans un siècle où l'on raisonne de tout, où l'on demande que tout soit démontré, il ne peut y avoir de religion ni aucune institution proprement dite; l'analyse fait évaporer le sentiment. Si elle veut remonter jusqu' à la source où il se rattache et en mettre la base à nu, elle ne trouvera rien, elle niera la réalité de cette base, sans s'apercevoir qu'elle n'est pas de son ressort.[2]

[1] Morley's *Voltaire*, p. 200.

[2] *Sa vie et ses Pensées*, p. 191.

Digitized by Google

The philosophical idea of the Renaissance was tried by "Time the old Judge" with inexorable justice, however slow the process, and reduced to its true resolution. And as the last century draws to its close in France we have its ultimate issue in a de-Christianized nation, making the experiment whether life is worth living upon the basis of Atheism.

If religion be the first fact about a people, the position of woman is the second. And in the modern world the position of woman has been determined by religion, and made an integral part of it. The family, as it still exists in Europe, is the creation of the Church. Marriage, monogamous, indissoluble, sacramental, is the basis upon which she has reared the social order. And the great guardian of marriage, as she conceives of it, is that virtue of purity to which she attaches so transcendent an importance. It is a virtue, the very idea of which may be said to have well-nigh vanished from Europe when the religion of Jesus Christ appeared, and which, I suppose, we may take to be the loveliest flower of the Catholic faith, found nowhere else in the same stainless perfection and utter whiteness. The *philosophes* judged it to be a mere monkish superstition, altogether incompatible with the fair ideal of human life proposed to mankind in the *Pucelle*,[1] and their constant endeavour was to pour

[1] "Tout le xviii[e] siècle adorait cette *Pucelle* libertine," Sainte-Beuve observes: "les plus honnêtes gens en savaient par

Digitized by Google

contempt upon it and to root it out from society. Let me again quote Mr. Morley, who in a curious passage puts this point with a certain amount of candour:—

> The peculiarity of the licence of France in the middle of the eighteenth century is, that it was looked upon with complacency by the great intellectual leaders of opinion. It took its place in the progressive formula. What austerity was to other forward movements, licence was to this. It is not difficult to perceive how so extraordinary a circumstance came to pass. Chastity was the supreme virtue in the eyes of the Church, the mystic key to Christian holiness. Continence was one of the most sacred of the pretensions by which the organized preachers of superstition claimed the reverence of men and women. It was identified, therefore, in a particular manner with that Infamous, against which the main assault of the time was directed. So men contended, more or less expressly, first, that continence was no commanding chief among virtues; then that it was a very superficial and easily practised virtue; finally, that it was no virtue at all, but if sometimes a convenience, generally an impediment to free human happiness.[1]

Such, according to their ablest apologist, was the formal teaching of the *philosophes* as to the relations between the sexes. Nor is there any room for doubt as to what came of it. There is an overwhelming mass of evidence regarding the ever-increasing degradation of woman as the "analytical philosophy of the human mind" pursued its victorious course. For my present purpose it will be sufficient to refer to the MM. de Goncourt's work, *La Femme au* xviii^e^ *siècle*, a book which, so far as my own researches enable

cœur des chants entiers (j'en ai entendu réciter encore). M. de Malesherbes lui-même, assure-t-on, savait sa *Pucelle* par cœur." *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii. p. 401.

[1] Morley's *Voltaire*, p. 108.

Digitized by Google

me to judge, amply merits the praise generally bestowed upon it, as a revelation of the century with which it deals, initiating us into the inner life and moral character of those times. The burden of their volume is the complete revolution which was effected in woman by the new doctrine.

At its call, under its tuition, both the heart and the mind of woman are entirely transformed. Her inborn feelings, her need of the trust, the support, the something to fill the heart, which faith, self-devotion, alone can satisfy, the rule of life which convent education had made quite natural to her,—all those weaknesses of her past she casts off, as though she would put away childish things from her soul. She unburdens her mind of every idea with anything serious about it, in order to raise herself to that new point of view whence the world, looking down on life, measures it by one only standard, that of the agreeable and the disagreeable. Repelling what are called "the phantasms of modesty and decorum," giving up all the tender pieties, all the household functions, of which her sex had in times past accepted the responsibilities, the duties, and the sorrows, woman adapts herself to the level and tone of the new teaching; and soon parades that easy-going worldly wisdom, which sees in human life, relieved from every troublesome obligation, but one great right, but one final cause—amusement; which sees in woman, delivered from the servitude of matrimony and the ties of home, only a being whose one duty is to figure in society as an embodiment of pleasure, to offer it and to give it to all.[1]

Let us turn from this general view to the chapter entitled *L'Amour*. Up to the death of Louis XIV., we read, France seemed determined to etherealize love: to make of it a theoretic passion, a dogma surrounded with an adoring reverence which resembled religious worship, to veil its materiality by an immateriality of sentiment. Even in its perversion it

[1] *La Femme au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 40.

Digitized by Google

strove to wear some appearance of virtue: to put on a semblance of greatness and generosity, of courage and delicacy. "Ses fautes, ses hontes mêmes, gardent une politesse et une excuse, presque une pudeur." Such was the ideal which, transmitted from the age of chivalry, still lingered in France until the eighteenth century.

But in the eighteenth century what becomes of this ideal? In the days of Louis XV. the ideal of love is nothing more than desire: love is sensual gratification. Sensual gratification—that is the explanation of the eighteenth century; that is its secret, its charm, its soul. It breathes, it exhales sensual gratification: that is the air which sustains and quickens it; its atmosphere, its breath of life, its element and its inspiration; its very existence and its genius. Woman now is a sensual gratification, and nothing beside. The eighteenth century when it says *I love you* means only *I desire you.* For men possession, for women conquest, is all the scope, all the ambition of this new love . . . . . The age has got "to the truth of things," it has restored free play to the senses. It glories in having done away with exaggerations, grimaces, affectations. The morals of the time incite woman to plain and open gallantry, to boldness in misconduct, by convenient principles adapted to her instincts. From the current ideas, from the reigning philosophy, from habits and doctrines, all conspiring together against prejudices of every sort and kind, from the great intellectual revolution, which in society has demolished or reconstructed every ethical principle, a theory springs up which would enlarge the conscience of woman by taking her out of the littlenesses of her sex. There is now quite a new standard for her of right-living: it is as though her honour were displaced and made altogether independent of her chastity, her deserts, her duties. Modesty, decorum! the eighteenth century labours to dispense her from such wretched trifles. And in lieu of all the virtues which had been required of her very disposition and nature, it expects from her only the virtues of an *honnête homme.* Serviceable sophisms, apologies for shame, lessons of lubricity float in the atmosphere of the time, sink from the mind into the heart, strip away little by little remorse from woman,

Digitized by Google

now enlightened, emboldened, dazed, incited to make easy terms with her conscience, by systems and ideas which are under the highest social patronage, which escape from the most illustrious lips, from the greatest souls, from the most reputable geniuses. And this love proclaimed by naturalism and materialism, put into practice by Helvétius before his marriage with Mdlle. de Ligniville, glorified by Buffon's celebrated saying, "Il n'y a de bon dans l'amour que le physique," this merely physical love ends by displaying itself, even in woman, in all its brutality.[1]

This was the woman of the eighteenth century as she existed in French society under *philosophe* teaching. Those who care to consult the MM. de Goncourt's pages will find there a full account of what marriage and maternity became in her hands. I turn from these writers to their accomplished critic, M. Scherer, and shall borrow his words to trace the effect upon French society of this transformation. He has been speaking of the *salon* of the age, and of all those graces of conversation, those refinements of wit and manners, that perfect elegance and *bon ton* which gave to it its inimitable character:

Life can hardly get on without a serious aim; it presents this everlasting contradiction, that, tending to happiness, it cannot attach itself thereto as to its proper object, without destroying, in strictest consequence, the conditions of happiness. These men, these women, who seemed to live only for the sake of things that appear most desirable, for grace and honour, for love and intelligence, these people had dried up in themselves the sources of love and intelligence. This consummate epicureanism was defeating its purpose. These virtues, exclusively virtues of sociability, were proving unequal to the maintenance of society. This activity, in which duty, effort, sacrifice had no place, was devouring itself. Soul and conscience have been extinguished as useless lights, and

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 141—152.

Digitized by Google

behold! all is darkness. Intellect was to take the place of everything, and intellect has only served to blight everything, and itself first of all. One thing alone has been asked of human destiny—pleasure. And it is *ennui* that has responded.

This incurable ill of *ennui*, the eighteenth century everywhere bears about with it. It is rooted and grounded in *ennui;* I had almost said *ennui* is its motive power. Thereby are to be explained its agitations, its nauseas, its hidden sadnesses, the audacity of its vices. It is ever turning about, without finding anything to attach itself to. It snatches at everything, but always to fall back into a lower depth of life-weariness. Every fruit that it bites leaves behind a bitterer taste of ashes. It galvanizes itself and cannot succeed in feeling alive. It is sad, sad as death, and it lacks even the grandeur of melancholy. It would turn everything, even its own existence, into a mere show: and by the show it is no longer interested. Lassitude, interior aridity, prostration of all vital forces, that is what it has come to. Then it is that a well-known phenomenon makes its appearance. Once entered on the downward course, man cannot stop himself. Deeper and deeper does he go in his quest, digging as for hidden treasures even in the void inane. No longer believing in anything, he is still on the track of a something, he knows not what, that escapes him. Debauchery, that too, pursues a fugitive vision, which always eludes it. It demands more of the senses than they can give. Stung by these disappointments it invents refinements. It spices lubricity with every kind of infamy. It becomes ferocious. It delights in inflicting pain on the beings it ruins. It enjoys the remorse, the shame of its victims. It prides itself on compromising women, on breaking their hearts, on depraving them to the utmost of its ability. Gallantry is thus turned into cynicism and fiendishness. Cruelty, and method in cruelty, are deemed matter of boasting. To parade atrocity is judged good taste. Nor is this, even this, enough. Insatiable appetites will ask of crime the savour that is no longer afforded them by vice. "There is," say so well the MM. de Goncourt, "there is an inexorable logic which compels the evil passions of humanity to work themselves out to the bitter end, and to burst out finally in absolute horror." This logic had assigned to the voluptuous wickedness of the eighteenth century its monstrous resolution. There had been a too great habit of moral cruelty in men's minds for that cruelty to remain there, and not to extend to

Digitized by Google

their senses. They had made too much sport with the sufferings of woman's heart, not to be tempted to make her suffer more surely and more palpably. After exhausting tortures on her soul, why not try them on her body? Why not seek unsophistically in her blood the enjoyments which had been found in her tears? This is a teaching that is brought into the world and is formulated, a teaching towards which the whole century had unawares been drifting, and which is, at bottom, only the materialization of its appetites. And was it not fated that this last word should be said, that the erethism of ferocity should assert itself as a principle, as a revelation; and that at the close of this refined and gallant decadence, after all that had been done to bring about the torture of woman, M. de Sade should appear, with the blood of the guillotine, to establish the Reign of Terror in love itself.[1]

Such was the effect of the philosophy of sensation upon woman. All that distinguished her position in the modern world from that which she held in Pagan antiquity had come to her from Christianity. And with Christianity it vanished, leaving her poor indeed; stripped of the robe of grace and glory wherewith the Catholic religion had decked her; naked, and not ashamed. Thus, while the monarchs of the age were triumphing over the last remains of medieval liberty, and carrying the Cæsarism, which is the political idea of the Renaissance, to complete development, its intellectual idea, embodied in the doctrines of the *philosophes*, had issued in ferocious animalism. The social edifice was at the same time overweighted with Absolutism, and shorn of the two main foundations, God and the Family, upon which Christianity had reared it. Liberty and Freewill, those two great lights, ruling, the one in the political order and the

[1] *Études sur la Littérature Contemporaine*, p. 99.

Digitized by Google

other in the moral, die before the "uncreating word" of Materialism; for matter knows no laws but the physical and mathematical. And then is realized the picture traced by the deepest thinker England ever produced :—

> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And, last, eat up himself.

All systems of philosophy may be reduced to two great classes. Everything depends upon the point of departure. The recognition of the consciousness of the *Ego* by itself, or the non-recognition—such is the radical difference. There lies a whole universe between the philosophy which starts from the soul as the true *Ego*, the form of the body, and the philosophy which starts from the physical organism. "By their fruits ye shall know them," applies as truly to the thoughts of men's hearts as to their external actions. Philosophy is in a very real sense the guide of life; and the unique value of the history of the eighteenth century is that it shows by a pregnant example whither the philosophy of sensation leads mankind.

So much as to the progress of the Renaissance idea in the public order and in the philosophical, throughout Continental Europe during the last century.

Digitized by Google

Let us now turn to our own country and consider how remarkable a contrast it presents to the general course of European development, both political and intellectual.

Lord Stanhope introduces his well-known historical work[1] by instituting a comparison between the era of the Georges in England and the era of the Antonines in Rome. I do not know whether the analogy is very felicitous; but certainly we may say that the whole period of our history with which I am here concerned —the century between 1688 and 1788— and not merely that portion of it with which Lord Stanhope deals, has in common with the age of the philosophic Cæsars, the notes of material greatness and successful war. And we may yield full assent, too, to his proposition that with us this prosperity did not depend upon the character of a single man. Rome, so long accustomed to conquer others, had made "a shameful conquest of herself" long before the time of the Antonines; and underneath the fallacious glories of a benevolent despotism, the bases of the public order were swiftly and incurably decaying. The foundations whereon the greatness of our country rested in the last century, were ancient free institutions, which, as it advanced, were continuously strengthened, consolidated, and developed. From 1688 to 1788 the history of England is

[1] *The History of England from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of Versailles*, 1713—1783. By Lord Mahon. In Seven Volumes. Third Edition. 1853.

Digitized by Google

essentially the history of the sure advance of constitutional freedom, of civil and religious liberty. It is indeed a general law that

> "checks and disasters
> Grow in the veins of actions highest reared."

And the progress of our country in the epoch of which I am writing is no exception to this law. Thus the age of Anne was in few particulars a period of improvement: in not a few it was certainly a period of retrogression. Mr. Lecky reckons, and I think with justice, the Schism Act passed in 1714 to crush the seminaries of Dissenters, and to deprive them of the means of educating their children in their own religious opinions, "one of the most tyrannical measures enacted in the Eighteenth Century."[1] And he adds, what is undoubtedly true, that during the latter years of the Queen's reign, political and religious liberty were in extreme danger, So, too, the first twenty years of George III.'s reign were full of the struggles of that monarch to increase his prerogative, struggles which, as Sir Erskine May judiciously observes, produced "the fiercest turbulence and discontent among the people, the most signal failures in the measures of the Government, and the heaviest disasters to the State,"[2] and which had scarcely any other result. But these and other checks in the development of constitutional rights were but transient. As the century goes on, we find

[1] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 95.
[2] *Constitutional History*, vol. i. p. 59.

Digitized by Google

the general effect of legislation to be the better assurance and more complete development of the freedom which is the immemorial heritage of the English people. It opens with the famous Act for Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject (1 W. & M. c. 2), commonly known as the *Declaration of Right*. It closes with the solemn acknowledgment made to the Peers on behalf of the Prince of Wales, in the debates upon the Regency Bill, that "he understood too well the sacred principles which seated the House of Brunswick on the throne, ever to assume or exercise any power, be his claim what it might, not derived from the will of the people expressed by their representatives and their Lordships in Parliament assembled."[1] And throughout it we find the same homage paid to those "sacred principles," not merely as a rhetorical flourish, but as a reality, expressed in legislation, embodied in institutions, permeating the political life of the country. The Act of Settlement of 1701 was the fitting supplement to the *Declaration of Right*. It established the Crown upon a strictly Parliamentary tenure, and effectually disposed of the superstition that the nation was the property of a particular family by virtue of an immediate divine right. At the same time the kindred figment of passive obedience received a mortal wound, by the excision from the oath of allegiance of the clause asserting, in direct opposition to the *Great Charter*, that the subject

[1] Quoted in Sir Erskine May's *Constitutional History*, vol. i. p. 180.

Digitized by Google

might in no case take up arms against the sovereign. The practice of strictly appropriating the revenue, according to annual votes of supply, begun in 1689, and ever since continued, has, in Mr. Hallam's phrase, secured "the transference of the executive authority from the Crown to the two Houses of Parliament, and especially the Commons;" the "body which prescribes the application of the revenue, as well as investigates at its pleasure every act of the administration."[1] Hardly a less effective guarantee of constitutional government was afforded by the legislation of 1689 regarding the military forces of the Crown. By the Bill of Rights it is declared unlawful to keep any forces in time of peace without the consent of Parliament. This consent, by an invariable and wholesome usage, is given only from year to year in the Mutiny Act. "These are the two effectual securities against military power: that no pay can be issued to the troops without a previous authorization by the Commons in a Committee of Supply, and by both Houses in an Act of Appropriation, and that no officer or soldier can be punished for disobedience, nor any court-martial held, without the annual re-enactment of the Mutiny Bill. Thus it is strictly true that if the King were not to summon Parliament every year, his army would cease to have a legal existence, and the refusal of either House to concur in the Mutiny Bill would at once wrest the sword out of his grasp."[2]

[1] *Constitutional History*, vol. iii. p. 118.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 149.

Digitized by Google

Nor has the great guarantee for a pure administration of justice—the complete independence of its dispensers—been less carefully and effectually secured. In 1701 the judges ceased to be removable, even in theory, at the pleasure of the Crown. An Act was passed in that year providing that they should hold office during good behaviour, subject only to removal upon the joint address of both Houses of Parliament: while in 1760 it was further enacted that their commissions should no longer be determined by the demise of the Crown. Of the ameliorations introduced into our jurisprudence I shall here notice only two: the abolition by the Bill of Rights of the dispensing power—the favourite instrument whereby monarchial absolutism made void the law; and the statute regarding treason, passed in 1695, the effect of which, and of the complementary Act of Queen Anne, was to put an end for ever to the shedding of innocent blood in political trials. The institution of cabinet government, and the existing method of ministerial responsibility, must in strictness be dated from the reign of George I., although homogeneous administrations had been the rule since 1708. And if we consider the Parliamentary constitution of the country, while there can be no question that the composition of the Lower Chamber was theoretically indefensible, there can be as little question that it practically worked well. "This House," remarked Pitt, in his Reform speech in 1783, "is not the representative of the people of Great Britain. It is.

Digitized by Google

the representative of ruined and exterminated towns, of noble families, of wealthy individuals, of foreign potentates."[1] True. But let us hear Mr. Gladstone on the other side :—

"Before 1832, the Parliamentary constitution of our fathers," he writes, "was full of flaws in theory, and blots in practice, that could not bear the light. But it was, notwithstanding, one of the wonders of the world. It was a mosaic, like that cabinet of Lord Chatham, the composition of which has been embedded by the eloquence of Mr. Burke in the permanent literature of the country. The forms and colours of the bits that made it up, were, indeed, yet more curious. It included every variety of franchise, from pure nomination by an individual, down to or up to household suffrage, say from zero to what is deemed infinity. It gave to the aristocracy and to landed wealth the preponderance, of which the larger part has now been practically handed over to wealth at large. Subject always to this confession, it made an admirable provision for diversity of elements, for the representation of mind, for the political training from youth upwards of the most capable material of the country."[2]

But above and beyond all this, the people of England breathed the air and were filled with the spirit of political freedom. A limited monarchy, an independent magistracy, responsible ministers, Parliamentary control of the finances and of the army, are after all but the guarantees and instruments of liberty. They secure it if it exists; they provide for its systematic exercise. But they do not create it; they do not even restore it when it has become extinct. Goethe somewhere remarks, "free government is

[1] An allusion to the Indian Princes, whose agents bought boroughs at their employers' cost. The Nawaub is said to have had, at one time, eight nominees in the House of Commons.

[2] *The Nineteenth Century*, November, 1877, p. 540.

Digitized by Google

only possible where men have learnt to govern themselves." A rising chain of corporate energies pervading the body politic is the true training-ground for the development of individuality and for the acquisition of the aptitudes and habits of civic freedom, while it supplies the best check upon the domination of the central power. Liberty is impossible in any country when you have nothing but the State on the one hand and the individual on the other —even if it should rain ballot-boxes. It may exist in its plenitude among a people where universal suffrage has never been heard of, and the electoral franchise is in the hands of a few. In England, at the middle of the last century, out of a population estimated at eight millions, only some hundred and fifty thousand voted in the elections of members of Parliament. But throughout the kingdom there reigned that general political sense engendered by ages of local self-government and unfettered discussion of public affairs, which makes the true difference between a free and a servile people, and without which, what it is the fashion to call a *plébiscite*, is merely a gigantic hypocrisy, the expression of millions of perjuries. In 1693 the Act subjecting the Press to a censorship expired and was not renewed, and thenceforth that "liberty of unlicensed printing," for which the lofty eloquence of Milton had pleaded in vain, took its place among the rights of the subject, and was soon discerned by our statesmen to be "the greatest engine of public safety," "the safeguard of

Digitized by Google

all other liberties." It was the special and unique glory of England in the last century that her sons enjoyed freedom of thought and speech upon the most important concerns of society. Then, as now, our country was "dear for her reputation through the world," as

> The land where, girt with friends or foes,
> A man may speak the thing he will.

And this was, and is, the very life of British liberty.

"English freedom," Charles James Fox told the House of Commons, with equal eloquence and truth, "does not depend upon the executive government nor upon the administration of justice, nor upon any one particular or distinct part [of our institutions], nor even upon [constitutional] forms, so much as it does on the general freedom of speech and of writing. Speech ought to be completely free, the press ought to be completely free. What I mean is that any man may write and print what he pleases, though he is liable to be punished if he abuses that freedom. This is perfect freedom. For my own part, I have never heard of any danger arising to a free State from the freedom of the press or freedom of speech; so far from it, I am perfectly clear, that a free State cannot exist without both. It is not the law that is to be found in books that has constituted the true principle of freedom in any country at any time. No! it is the energy, the boldness of a man's mind which prompts him to speak not in private, but in large and popular assemblies, that constitutes, that creates, in a State, the spirit of freedom. This is the principle which gives life to liberty; without it the human character is a stranger to freedom. As a tree that is injured at the root, and the bark taken off the branches, may live for a while—some sort of blossom may still remain—but will soon wither, decay, and perish, so take away the freedom of speech or of writing, and the foundation of all your freedom is gone. You will then fall, and be degraded and despised by all the world for your weakness and your folly, in not taking care of that which con-

Digitized by Google

ducted you to all your fame, your greatness, your opulence, and prosperity."[1]

There is, it is true, one department of human liberty in which, during the last century, we find most grievous restrictions still existing in this country, and that the most precious department, for, as Milton well asks, "Who can be at rest, who can enjoy anything in this world with contentment, who hath not liberty to serve God and to save his soul"? In 1688, indeed, the Toleration Act was passed, which relieved from the penalties of Elizabethan and Stuart legislation, persons dissenting from the Established Church, provided they took certain oaths, and made certain declarations as to the Trinity, the Sacred Scriptures, Supremacy and Allegiance, and subscribed a denial of Transubstantiation. But this measure left intact the Test and Corporation Acts, whereby dissidents from the State religion were disqualified for public life. Nor did it extend any relief to Catholics. Still, crude and unsatisfactory as this enactment now seems to us, it was supremely distasteful to the High Tories of the last century, and was in great danger of being repealed during the closing years of Queen Anne, when the spirit which found expression in the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts was rampant. "The effect of these measures," Lord Stanhope writes, "was to reduce the Protestant Dissenters to great humiliation and depression," and it was not until

[1] *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxii. p. 419. I have taken the liberty to condense a good deal: in fact, I have presented rather a mosaic than an extract from the speech.

Digitized by Google

1719 that the legislation initiated by the ancestor of that peer brought them relief from the worst of their grievances. "The Test and Corporation Acts, however, remained upon the Statute Book a hundred and nine years more, but remained only like rusty weapons hung in an armoury, trophies of past power, not instruments of further aggression or defence. An Indemnity Bill passed every year from the first of George II. (there were some, but very few exceptions) threw open the gates of all offices to Protestant Dissenters, as fully as if the law had been repealed, and if they still wished its repeal it was because they thought it an insult, not because they felt it an injury."[1] Catholics were in far worse case. Not only was the persecuting legislation of Tudors and Stuarts retained in the Statute Book, but fresh laws were enacted against them: laws which, Mr. Lecky well observes, "constitute the foulest blot upon the Revolution." I shall cite, in preference to employing any words of my own, the account of this legislation given by that able and impartial writer:—

"To omit minor details, an Act was passed in 1699, by which, any Catholic priest convicted of celebrating Mass, or discharging any sacerdotal function, in England (except in the house of an ambassador) was made liable to perpetual imprisonment; and, in order that this law might not become a dead letter, a reward of £100 was offered for conviction. Perpetual imprisonment was likewise the punishment to which any papist became liable who was found guilty of keeping a school, or otherwise undertaking the education of the young. No parent might send a child abroad to

[1] *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht*, vol. i. p. 329.

Digitized by Google

be educated in the Catholic faith, under a penalty of a fine of £100; which was bestowed upon the informer. All persons who did not, within six months of attaining the age of eighteen, take the oath, not only of allegiance but also of supremacy, and subscribe the declaration against transubstantiation, became incapable of either inheriting or purchasing land, and the property they would otherwise have inherited passed to the next Protestant heir. By a law which was enacted in the first year of George I., all persons in any civil or military office, all members of colleges, teachers, preachers, and lawyers of every grade, were compelled to take the oath of supremacy, which was distinctly anti-Catholic as well as the oath of allegiance, and the declaration against the Stuarts. By the same law, any two Justices of the Peace might, at any time, tender to any Catholic the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, if they regarded him as disaffected. They might do this without any previous complaint, or any evidence of his disaffection; and if he refused to take them, he was liable to all the penalties of recusancy, which reduced him to a condition of absolute servitude. A popish recusant was debarred from appearing at court, or even coming within ten miles of London, from holding any office or employment, from keeping arms in his house, from travelling more than five miles from home unless by licence, under pain of forfeiting all his goods, and from bringing any action at law, or suit in equity. A married woman recusant forfeited two-thirds of her jointure or dower, was disabled from being executrix or administratrix to her husband, or obtaining any part of his goods, and was liable to imprisonment, unless her husband redeemed her by a ruinous fine. All popish recusants, within three months of conviction, might be called upon by four Justices of the Peace to renounce their errors, or to abandon the kingdom; and if they did not depart, or if they returned without the king's licence, they were liable to the penalty of death. By this Act, the position of the Catholics became one of perpetual insecurity. It furnished a ready handle to private malevolence, and often restrained the Catholics from exercising even their legal rights. Catholics who succeeded in keeping their land were compelled to register their estates, and all future conveyances and wills relating to them. They were subjected by an annual law to a double land-tax, and in 1722, a special tax was levied upon their property."[1]

[1] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 275.

Digitized by Google

It is melancholy to consider how little, during the period with which I am concerned, was done for the relief of Catholics. The only two measures of redress, indeed, which are worthy of mention, are an Act of 1716, which partially prevented sales by them of their real estate from being questioned, and an Act of 1788, whereby a new oath was devised for their benefit. It made no reference to the Pope's spiritual authority, but only denied to his Holiness temporal or civil jurisdiction in this realm. And upon taking it, Catholics were allowed to inherit or purchase land, and to say or hear Mass without a penalty. It must not be supposed, however, that there were wanting among our rulers, men of large and generous views, who, long before 1778, would have assented to this or a greater measure of relief. Thus, in 1718, a scheme for mitigating the severity of the penal laws was proposed by Lord Stanhope; and, to go back still further, it is certain that nothing would have been more agreeable to William III., both as consonant with his own wise principles of policy, and as acceptable to the Pope and Emperor, to whom he was under such great obligations, than the extension to his Catholic subjects of the same measure of religious freedom which he was able, in spite of Tory opposition, to secure to Protestant Nonconformists. "No measure," Hallam justly observes, "would have been more politic, for it would have dealt to the Jacobite cause a more deadly wound than any which double taxation or penal laws were able to effect."

Digitized by Google

And that was, probably, one of the main reasons why the High Tories persistently opposed it. So far as the Whigs were concerned, it is quite certain that their hatred of Catholicism was rather political than religious. They saw it, not as it had existed in the Middle Ages—the mother and nurse of civil freedom—but as it was presented to them in contemporary France, Italy, and Spain, the accomplice and instrument of despotism: they saw it in the light in which James II. had exhibited it, as the object for which he had sought to overthrow the ancient liberties of England. The worst foes of Catholics at that period, as indeed often before and since, have been those of their own household. Their cause was identified in the popular mind—and not unreasonably—with that of the worst of kings; the shepherd of the people whose favourite under-shepherds were Jeffreys and Kirke: the vassal of the tyrant who had revoked the Edict of Nantes and ordered the dragonnades. Still, as a matter of fact, terrible as is the show which the anti-Catholic legislation in force up to 1778, makes in the Statute Book, there can be no question that the position of the small and unpopular remnant that adhered to the ancient faith in this country, was far better than that of their brethren in any foreign Protestant land, except Holland and the dominions of the Hohenzollerns, and infinitely superior to that of the Protestant minority in any Catholic State. "It is certain," writes Mr. Lecky—and the facts well warrant his assertion—"that during the greater part

Digitized by Google

of the reigns of Anne, George I., and George II., the Catholic worship in private houses and chapels was undisturbed, that the estates of Catholics were regularly transmitted from father to son, and that they had no serious difficulty in educating their children. The Government refused to put the laws against the priests into execution, and legal evasions were employed and connived at."[1] In Ireland it was very different, as we all know too well, and are likely to know even better by the teachings of bitterest experience. For the stern truth holds good of nations as of individuals, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap:" and the full harvest of the Irish penal laws is by no means gathered in, as yet. There is absolutely no parallel to them in the annals of religious persecution. For the object with which they were devised, was not to crush a sect, but to deprive a nation of the most sacred rights of human nature, and to condemn it to spiritual death by a prolonged agony of torture. It is not necessary that I should dwell upon the details of this horrible legislation. William III., there is good ground to believe, contemplated and would gladly have carried out a very different policy. "Touched by the fate of a gallant nation that had made itself the victim to French promises," writes an authority[2] whom there

[1] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 304.

[2] Swift's *Works*. Scott's Edition, vol. xviii. p. 13. The authority is Sir Charles Wogan, in a letter addressed to Swift where he relates this offer to have been made to his uncle Tyrconnel, by William.

Digitized by Google

is no reason for suspecting, "the Prince of Orange before the decisive battle of Aghrim, offered to Irish Catholics the free exercise of their religion, half the churches of the kingdom, half the employments, civil and military too, and the moiety of their ancient properties." The offer was not accepted; could not, indeed, have been accepted in the circumstances of the time; and such terms, which, favourable as they were, fall far short of the requirements of justice, have never again been tendered to the Irish nation. "The victorious party," as Hallam writes, "saw no security but in a system of oppression." It was, however, under the last of the Stuarts that this system attained its complete proportions, and was developed in its full ferocity. The accession of Anne was followed by the enactment of the abominable Statute, which, under the pretence of preventing "the further growth of popery," reduced the people of Ireland to a condition, in many respects, worse than that of Muscovite serfs. From the accession of the House of Hanover, their position improved; slowly and intermittently indeed, but surely. The Statute of the sixth year of George I. asserting the right of the English Parliament to bind the people and kingdom of Ireland, was, it is true, an odious mark of degradation; but it certainly did not affect for the worse the actual government of the country. It is certain, too, that under George II. there was a considerable revival of Irish manufactures and commerce. By the middle of the century Catholic

Digitized by Google

worship was practically tolerated. In 1778 an Act was carried, the value of which is sufficiently evidenced by Mr. Froude's complaint that it "is the first in the series of measures, yet perhaps unended, which are called justice to Ireland."[1] It enabled Irish Catholics once again to acquire an interest in the lands of their fathers, although only "for a term of 999 years." It was followed in 1782 by the Catholic Relief Act, by which the Catholic people of Ireland were enabled to buy, sell, and bequeath, like any one else, and so recovered their civil rights, although still excluded from political life. In the same year the Act of George I. was repealed, and the Irish Parliament obtained the sole right to make laws for Ireland.

Such, in brief outline, is the constitutional progress achieved in these islands during the hundred years which preceded the French Revolution. Rough and imperfect as the sketch is, it is enough to indicate that England was treading, in the political order, a path diametrically opposite to that of Continental Europe. And whatever blots there may have been upon our polity, it shows like utter whiteness beside the darkness of the house of bondage in which the rest of mankind languished. We can easily understand the enthusiasm which English freedom awaked in the breasts of the most accomplished and clear-sighted of foreign observers. It is no wonder that Voltaire, superficial as was his acquaintance with the actual working of our Constitution, found our country

[1] *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, Book vi. c. i.

Digitized by Google

the only one in the world where the monarch was powerful for good, and impotent for evil, where the nobles lacked alike vassals and insolence, and the people shared in the government without prejudice to order.[1] It is no wonder that Montesquieu, who visited England in 1729, described our system as the "living incarnation of the spirit of liberty."[2] It is no wonder that d'Argenton, writing some years later,[3] discerned in the influence and example of England a formidable danger to French absolutism. "Il souffle d'Angleterre," he observes, "un vent philosophique: on entend murmurer ces mots de liberté, de républicanisme; déjà les esprits en sont pénétrés: et l'on sait à quel point l'opinion gouverne le monde."

And now let us turn to the intellectual order. As I have observed, it was in 1688 that Locke first published his famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, whence Voltaire and Rousseau and Diderot, and the whole tribe of the Encyclopædists, who were to be the ultimate exponents of the Renaissance principle of Materialism, derived the doctrines which

[1] *Lettres sur les Anglais*, Lettre viii.

[2] *Esprit des Lois*, Book xix. c. 27; and he elsewhere writes:—"L'Angleterre est à présent le plus libre pays qui soit au monde, je n'en excepte aucune république; je l'appelle libre, parceque le prince n'a le pouvoir de faire aucun tort imaginable à qui que ce soit, par la raison que son pouvoir est contrôlé et borné par un acte .... Quand un homme en Angleterre aurait autant d'ennemis qu'il a de cheveux sur la tête, il ne lui en arriverait rien. C'est beaucoup, car la santé de l'âme est aussi nécessaire que celle du corps."

[3] In Jan. 1754.

Digitized by Google

ruled, in the mind of Continental Europe, throughout the *siècle Français*. Meanwhile, in England, we have the spectacle of the repudiation of his own spiritual offspring by the introducer of the new philosophy. Toland and Tindal, Collins and Woolston, were undoubtedly, in their different degrees, but the logical unfolders of Locke's opinions, and the consistent followers of his method. And the earliest of these writers avowed and gloried in this fact, much to his master's indignation and disgust. Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious*, appeared in 1696, and, as Mr. Stephen tells us, the author "attempted to gain a place in social and literary esteem by boasting of intimacy with Locke, and by engrafting his speculations upon Locke's doctrines. Locke emphatically repudiated this unfortunate disciple, whose personal acquaintance with him was slight, and whose theories he altogether disavowed."[1] There can be no question that Locke was as sincere as he was inconsistent, and there can be as little question that "his inconsistency recommended him to his countrymen." The English mind throughout the last century was entirely out of sympathy with the anti-Christian movement, and—singular contrast to France!—the intellectual leaders of the country, Newton and Bentley, Clarke and Butler, Berkeley and Addison, Swift and Pope, Johnson and Burke, were upon the other side. The four chief names of the sceptical school are Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury, Hume and Gibbon. Of these

[1] *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. i. p. 93.

Digitized by Google

Hume—with the single exception of Swift, perhaps, —the keenest intellect and acutest logician of the century, was undoubtedly the greatest, but he attracted very few readers. Moreover, his corrosive thought is veiled under a semblance of respect for Christianity, and his *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, in which his real opinions find most explicit expression, did not appear until after his death, which took place in 1776. It was in that year that Gibbon published the first two volumes of his *Decline and Fall*, and the indignation with which they were received showed how uncongenial to the English mind were the views which they presented regarding the rise and spread of Christianity. It was not until a later period than that with which I am now concerned that this work exercised much influence in our country. The two earlier writers on the sceptical side whom I have mentioned, are intellectually of much less account than these. Bolingbroke was indeed in his day a very considerable figure, not only in the political, but also in the literary world. But I suppose that Pope summed up the general verdict about him, when he pronounced him to be "a very great wit and a very indifferent philosopher." It was in the poet's own beautiful *Essay on Man* that the fatalism and naturalism which his friend called Theism, relieved by poetical ornament and a mild infusion of orthodoxy, affected the public mind most largely, and not, as I venture to think, injuriously. The influence of Shaftesbury was more direct, and apparently it was

Digitized by Google

detrimental. "Mr. Pope," writes Warburton in one of his letters to Hurd, "told me that to his knowledge the *Characteristics* had done more harm to Revealed Religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together.[1] It may well be doubted, however, whether the *Characteristics* reached a very extensive circle of readers, and to me, I own, it is inconceivable that its teaching should have deeply affected any man. Shaftesbury, if I may compare him with an eminent living writer, a very long way his superior, occupies in the speculative thought of the eighteenth century much the same place as that which is occupied by Mr. Matthew Arnold in the speculative thought of the nineteenth. The terminology of the two of course differs. In the place of the "sweetness and light" now confidently recommended to men as "the sovereign'st thing on earth" for the "inward bruise" of human nature, our ancestors a hundred and fifty years ago were exhorted to "cultivate the beautiful and the true." Instead of "a power not ourselves, a stream of tendency that makes for righteousness," the superior person of the last century prophesied to mankind of "a universal harmony." But the difference seems to be merely on the surface; the doctrine substantially the same; and we may be pretty sure that in the kind and extent of the influence now exercised by the gospel of "culture" we have an approximately correct measure of the kind and extent of the influence

[1] *Letter* xvii.

Digitized by Google

exercised by the philosophy which, as its accomplished chief declared, was only "good breeding carried a step higher." If Pope was right in his judgment that Shaftesbury's *Characteristics* did more harm to Revealed Religion than "all the works of infidelity put together," it may be reasonably concluded that the mischief effected by "the works of infidelity" was not very widespread. And, indeed, there is a vast amount of evidence that the professed assailants of Christianity quite failed to read the masses. I do not think that any competent critic will dissent from the conclusion expressed by Mr. Mark Pattison in his very carefully written essay on *Tendencies of Religious Thought in England from* 1688 *to* 1750, that "although a loose kind of Deism might be the tone of fashionable circles," "disbelief of Christianity was by no means the general state of the public mind;" that "notwithstanding the universal complaint of the High Church party as to the prevalence of infidelity, this mode of thinking was confined to a small section of society." M. Taine notes that "in the time of Johnson public opinion was enlisted on the side of Christianity."[1] And Burke, writing in 1790, while acknowledging that the authors "whom the vulgar in their blunt homely style call atheists and infidels," "made some noise in their day," testifies that "at present they repose in lasting oblivion." "Who, born within the last forty years," he continues, "has read one word of Collins

[1] *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, l. iii. c. 6.

Digitized by Google

and Toland and Tindal, of Chubb and Morgan, and that whole race that called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world? In a few years their few successors will go to the family vault of all the Capulets."[1] Such was the striking difference in the eighteenth century between the popular mind in England and in France. The barber who in Paris exclaimed to a customer,—"Ah, monsieur, je ne suis qu'un misérable perruquier; mais (proudly) je ne crois pas en Dieu plus qu'un autre," would have been impossible in London. It is curious, too, and noteworthy, that in this country the weapons used against the continuators of the philosophical movement which Locke immediately initiated, were almost all fabricated in the armoury of that thinker. While the French *philosophes* resorted to him for arguments against the Christian religion, British divines learnt of him to defend it. His treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, is the first of the apologies and rumours of apologies which did duty for theology with the English clergy throughout the eighteenth century, and of which we have the best and maturest fruit in Paley's writings.[2] It was rather as the father of such as make evidences, than as "the founder of

[1] *Reflections on the French Revolution*, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 223.

[2] I may observe that Paley's evidential writings do not fall within the period with which I am now concerned. His *View of the Evidences* was published in 1794; his *Natural Theology* in 1802.

Digitized by Google

the analytical philosophy of the human mind," that his influence was chiefly felt in England. To prove that religion was (as he had alleged) "reasonable," and then to establish the genuineness and authenticity of the ancient documents upon which they relied for a knowledge of it—such was the end and aim which the clergy, ambitious of adding to the literature of their profession, almost invariably proposed to themselves, until the rise of the Evangelical school. And, like Mr. Thwackum, when they said religion, they meant the Christian religion, and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion, and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England. They were in fact the professional defenders of the ecclesiastical system by law established, whereby they had their gain, and they conceived of it chiefly as a system of moral police. There was one writer among them indeed who took higher ground; who set himself seriously and dispassionately to look in the face the tremendous problems of man's destiny, and to find their solution, not in what Johnson called "the Old Bailey theology," which put the Apostles on their trial for forgery and acquitted them, but in the voice of conscience as the revelation of the "unwritten and eternal laws" graven on the fleshy tables of man's heart. To me, Butler, with his profound feeling of the "immeasurable world," the steady unflinching gaze of his "open eyes" that "desire the truth," into the abysmal mysteries which underlie human life, his unswerving resolve to speak

Digitized by Google

neither more nor less than he knew, to testify that he had seen and nothing else, stands out as the sole heroic figure in the somewhat motley crowd of British apologists.

But Butler's immediate influence does not seem to have been great. Nor, indeed, can it be said that his ultimate influence has been entirely in support of the cause which he set himself to defend. As to the other evidence-writers who flourished in the hundred years with which I am concerned, there is perhaps not one of them whose labours had much appreciable result beyond that of putting money in his purse and securing for himself ecclesiastical preferment. Warburton, upon the whole, probably the most considerable of them, may stand for a type of the rest. He considered his demonstration of the Mosaic religion to "fall very little short of mathematical certainty." Most of the other apologists thought the same of their performances: their *Trials of the Witnesses*, their *Essays on Truth*, their *Appeals to Common Sense*, and the like. But to all of them a remark of Mr. Leslie Stephen *versus* the Warburtonians, may be fairly applied. They all display the same "unwillingness to face the final questions." They give us nothing but bare logomachy. It is quite certain that they made no deep impression upon the public mind, although its sympathies were with them. The great mass of Englishmen regarded them, and their proofs which did not prove, much in the same way as Lord

Digitized by Google

Tennyson's *Northern Farmer* regarded the homilies of his parson :—

An' I hallus comed to 's choorch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
An' 'eerd un a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock[1] ower my yeäd,
En' I niver knaw'd whot a mëan'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said, an' I comed awaäy.

It was not by these "deep divines" that religion as a real living energy, potent to cleanse the hearts and to rule the lives of men, was preserved in England during the last century; not by these, but by a set of men whom they stigmatized as enthusiasts, and against whom they manifested an aversion no less strong than that which they displayed towards Papists and Freethinkers. It is not easy to over-estimate the spiritual darkness and moral degradation which had crept over the country within a quarter of a century after the Revolution of 1688. I shall not here enter upon a detailed inquiry as to the causes to which this is attributable. The natural tendency of Protestantism is towards a shadowy Theism and a substantial sensualism. But above and beyond this, there can be no doubt that the depression of the High Church element in the Anglican Establishment had greatly impaired it as a moral power in the country. The expulsion of the Non-jurors, the silencing of Convocation, the latitudinarian policy of the House of Hanover, significantly illustrated by the promotion of Hoadly to the Bishopric of Bangor, the year after George I.'s accession, did much to water down the orthodoxy and to

[1] Cockchafer.

Digitized by Google

weaken the spiritual influence of Anglicanism. Then again, the degradation of the Eucharistic rite of the Established Church into a legal test, dealt a deadly wound to religion itself through its most sacred ordinance. A form of godliness indeed remained and was jealously cherished—as much, perhaps, out of popular hatred against Catholic and Puritan, as for any other reason. But its power seemed to have passed away, and, as some keen observers judged, to have passed away for ever. Thus Voltaire, who visited England in 1726, when the Unitarian controversy was being agitated, wrote:—"Le parti d'Arius prend très mal son temps de reparaître dans un âge où tout le monde est rassasié de disputes et de sectes." And he adds, with much satisfaction,—"On est si tiède a présent sur tout cela, qu'il n'y a plus guère de fortune à fa ire pour une religion nouvelle ou renouvellée." It was in that year that John Wesley was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and began the movement in which he laboured so abundantly until his death in 1791. As he tells us in the preface to his *Sermons*, he found that "formality, mere outside religion," had "almost driven heart religion out of the world." To bring that "heart religion" back was the task to which he devoted his life, and for which he counted not his life dear. It would take me far beyond my present scope to speak at length of his work. I can do little more here than quote regarding him certain words of my own, written elsewhere:—

Digitized by Google

"Among the figures conspicuous in the history of England in the last century," I observed, "there is perhaps none more worthy of careful study than that of John Wesley. Make all deductions you please for his narrowness, his self-conceit, his extravagance, and still it remains that no one so nearly approaches the fulness of stature of the great heroes of Christian spiritualism in the Early and Middle Ages. He had more in common with St. Boniface and St. Bernardine of Sienna, with St. Vincent Ferrer and Savonarola, than any religious teacher whom Protestantism has ever produced. Nor is the rise of the sect which has adopted his name,—'the people called Methodists,' was his way of designating his followers,—by any means the most important of the results of his life and labours. It is not too much to say that he, and those whom he formed and influenced, chiefly kept alive in England the idea of a supernatural order amid the dull materialism and selfish coldness of the eighteenth century."[1]

But the point with which I am at present concerned is that this great and fruitful revival of "heart religion" (in Wesley's phrase), would have been, humanly speaking, impossible, save for the hold which "the mere outside religion" still maintained. It was not in the character of an opponent of the National Church, but as its true and faithful son, that Wesley commended himself to the people. To its Articles, its formularies, its ritual, its discipline, he unfeignedly, nay, zealously adhered; he desired neither to fall short of them nor to overpass them. He was perfectly loyal to them, and his burning desire to make them living realities to "a generation of triflers" (so he expressed himself), was the supreme evidence of his loyalty. And thus in one of his sermons[2] before the University of Oxford he insists that the question

[1] *Ancient Religion and Modern Thought*, 3rd Ed., p. 52.

[2] Preached in 1744.

Digitized by Google

wherewith he is concerned is not of "peculiar notions;" not "concerning doubtful opinions of one kind or another; but concerning the undoubted fundamental branches, if such there be, of our common Christianity." And he goes on to appeal solemnly to the authorities of the University, "in the fear and in the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear."

"Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you filled with the Holy Ghost? With all those fruits of the Spirit, which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God? Full of love and zeal to set up His kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care, that the one rational end of all our studies is to know, love, and serve 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent?' Do you inculcate upon them day by day, that love alone never faileth (whereas whether there be tongues, they shall fail, or philosophical knowledge, it shall vanish away); and that without love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake? Have you an eye to this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and the measure of their studies; desiring and labouring that, wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many 'burning and shining lights adorning the Gospel of Christ in all things?' And permit me to ask, Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Do you labour herein with all your might? Exerting every faculty of your soul? Using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power? Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so; I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians."

Such was the spirit in which John Wesley entered upon his mission. And the allegiance, ignorant as it

Digitized by Google

was, of the masses to the National Church and the Christian religion, supplied him with the fulcrum whereon he worked. The lever with which he moved the popular mind was the principle of faith. He appealed to what his hearers already believed, really, however otiosely, and to their hopes and fears thence resulting, declaring unto them Him whom they ignorantly worshipped. And so England listened to a message which had been little heard in the land since the great schism of the sixteenth century. For the message of John Wesley and his disciples was substantially that of the Catholic preachers of the Middle as of the Apostolic Age; the announcement of a supernatural order as a reality, and the prime reality: the proclamation of "justice, chastity, and judgment to come;" the call to penance.

But this great and fruitful revival of spiritual religion would, for that is my point, have been impossible, had it not been for the hold which the Established Church still maintained upon the mind of the country. The very success of the Methodist preachers is a sufficient proof how much vitality, under the appearance of death, still lurked in the national creed, with its large fragments of Catholic teaching. The Protestant prelates of the age—the Warburtons and Lavingtons—were no more at fault in scenting Popery in the new preachers, than were the Sumners and Maltbys of our own day in detecting the same taint in Tractarianism. Not indeed that the Methodists had any conscious leaning towards Catholicism. So

Digitized by Google

far were they from it that their founder in one place records his opinion that "no Romanist can expect to be saved according to the terms of the covenant of Jesus Christ."[1] But they were, in Lacordaire's admirable phrase, "children unknown to their mother, though borne in her womb." The reality of grace, its direct and sensible influence upon the human soul, the supreme excellence and importance of the spiritual and supernatural order, the contemptibleness and illusoriness of the phenomenal world, tenets which were of the essence of mediéval faith, were also of the essence of original Methodism. M. Taine notes with a *naïveté* of surprise, which is very winning, the phenomenon—to him unaccountable—that the "sap re-entered the old dogmas dried up for five hundred years." Consummate master of words as he is, he seems to be at a loss for expressions adequately to convey his surprise that Wesley, "a scholar and an Oxford student," "believed in the devil,"—not merely from the teeth, outwards, but in his heart: "saw the hand of God in the commonest events of life:" "fasted and wearied himself until he spat blood and almost died."[2] "What could such a man," he asks, "have done in France in the eighteenth century?" What he did in England we all know. And the fact that he did it is to my mind a sufficient proof how little our people were affected by any intellectual move-

[1] *Journal*, 1739.

[2] *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, l. iii. c. 3. I do not know how M. Taine computes his "five hundred years."

Digitized by Google

ment analogous to that which was destroying the very root of spiritualism in the French nation, and which was to issue in the monstrous spectacle of a great country, that held the first rank in Christendom while Christendom was, making public profession of Atheism.

It appears to me then that when we survey the eighteenth century, we may truly say—

> in the world's volume,
> Our Britain seems as of it, but not in it.

Both in the political and in the spiritual order, England stands apart from the rest of Europe. While in the nations of the Continent the last remains of medieval liberty are disappearing before renascent Cæsarism, and Christianity, the best pledge of liberty, because an incomparable instrument of Ethics, is being sapped by the sensualistic philosophy, with us "freedom broadens slowly down," and the greatest religious movement of modern times breathes new ife into the morality of the country. And this we owe mainly, as it seems to me, to the Revolution of 1688. When William III. landed at Torbay, England was on the very verge of despotism. James stood, as he told the Spanish Ambassador, to win or lose all. He lost, and his loss was the incalculable gain of the English nation. What we gained in the political order was the preservation of our old free institutions, and the banishment from our country of the Renaissance idea of monarchy. The Bill of Rights, as Lord Chatham happily expressed it, merely

Digitized by Google

"vindicated the English Constitution." "Except in the article of the dispensing power," writes Hallam, "we cannot say on comparing the Bill of Rights with what is proved to be the law by statutes or generally esteemed to be such on the authority of our best writers, that it took away any legal power of the Crown or enlarged the limits of popular and Parliamentary privilege."[1] And as he elsewhere puts it, the Revolution of 1688 was the triumph of those principles, which in the present day are denominated liberal or constitutional, over absolute monarchy. But our gain in the political order is closely connected with our gain in the spiritual. There is a strong sympathy, an intimate connection, between atheism and despotism, whether the tyrant be one or legion, an autocrat or a mob. Both are the expression, in different orders, of the same principle—the principle of Materialism. Both involve the negation of the value and rights of the spiritual side of man's nature. The theory of Hobbes was the fitting complement of the practice of the Stuarts, and was no less uncongenial to the mass of Englishmen. For as Milton, who knew his countrymen well, has noted, "The Englishman of many other nations is least atheistical, and bears a natural disposition of much reverence and awe towards the Deity."[2] There is a true instinct in the popular mind which teaches it that the cause of civil and of spiritual liberty is in truth identical. Hence

[1] *Constitutional History*, vol. iii. p. 105.

[2] *Reason of Church Government*, Book I. c. 7.

Digitized by Google

it is that a priesthood which sinks into the flatterer and tool of Absolutism is sure to lose its hold upon the heart and conscience of the people. Beneath its sacred vestments they discern the royal or imperial livery. They recognize the words of Balak although proceeding from the mouth of Balaam. The French clergy supply us with only too signal an illustration of this truth. From the hour in which, to use the emphatic expression of Innocent XI., they betrayed to Louis XIV. the sacred cause of the liberties of the Church, they forfeited not only the affection, but even the respect of their countrymen, to the incalculable loss of the French nation. They identified their cause with the cause of Cæsar. And they fell with Cæsar. Even now that identification subsists in the popular mind, and supplies the chief pretext for the attacks made upon Christianity by the so-called Liberals of contemporary France—the true descendants of the Jacobins, whose liberty, as Burke discerned, was not liberal. But while the French Episcopate were perpetrating the semi-apostacy of the Four Articles, the Protestant Bishops of this country were animated by a very different spirit. Although the mere creatures of the civil ruler who (as Elizabeth had reminded one of their order) had made, and could unmake them, although committed by their servile doctrines of immediate divine right and passive obedience to abject submission to the royal will, they dared to stand up against the exercise of a power which they believed to be contrary to the laws and

Digitized by Google

hostile to the religion of their country. "We have two duties to perform," Ken told the King, "our duty to God and our duty to your Majesty. We honour you, but we fear God." The words awoke an echo throughout the country. The effect of the trial of the seven Bishops was to identify the Established Church with the nation, in a way in which it never had been identified, since the change of religion under Henry VIII.; to present the Anglican clergy, for the first and last time, as the friends and defenders of English liberty, and to purchase for them a century of popularity. And the fact that, for many years after, the majority of them were in opposition to the new government, which they had in no small degree contributed to introduce, was far from injuring that popularity; for it was a manifest token of their independence. Their action might be illogical, but it possessed a persuasiveness beyond that of the finest syllogism. It appealed to the deepest feelings and truest instincts of Englishmen. Nor is it easy to over-estimate the advantage which accrued to the nation from this rehabilitation of its clergy in public esteem. The degradation of the spiritualty in the general estimate, is invariably accompanied by the degradation of the creed which they represent. You cannot in practice separate between the cause of religion and the cause of the ministers of religion. They present themselves as "ambassadors for God." And contempt of the messengers surely leads to contempt of the message. The

Digitized by Google

preservation and increase of the hold of religion and its ministers over the mind and affections of the English nation may then, as it seems to me, be undoubtedly reckoned among our gains by the Revolution of 1688. But this was not the only gain of the nation in the spiritual order. It was the overthrow of the Stuarts which made the great Methodist movement possible. It is only in a free country that such associations as those founded by John Wesley can be formed. Try to picture an analogous movement in the eighteenth century in France, where individual freedom lay crushed under monarchical despotism: where not only the bodies but the souls of the people were the king's! And the importance of the work which has been done by Methodism for England, done not only directly, but also and still more, indirectly, cannot easily be over-estimated. I do not think it too much to say that we owe it mainly to Methodism that while France is at heart Voltairean, England is still at heart Christian. "Methodism," writes a sagacious French critic, not likely to be prejudiced in its favour, "Methodism has changed the face of England. Yes; England as we know it at this day, with its chaste and grave literature, its Biblical language, its national piety, with its middle classes in whose exemplary morality lies the true strength of the country, this England is the work of Methodism."[1]

[1] Scherer: *Mélanges d'Histoire Religieuse*, p, 207.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF '89.

THE great historical fact of the age in which we live is the French Revolution of 1789. France is the centre and source of political movement throughout the Continent of Europe. Her geographical position; the peculiar genius of her people, at once passionately logical and logically passionate; the perfection of form, which is the great note of her literature; the wide diffusion of her language, now the *lingua Franca* of Western civilization, and holding in our times much the same position as that which was held by the Latin tongue in the Middle Ages—such are perhaps among the principal sources of her influence in the world, an influence but little diminished by her recent disasters. The history of Europe from 1789 down to the present day is substantially the history of the struggles of the French Revolution with the elements opposed to it; of the endeavour of the ideas which those words represent to embody themselves in facts, to mix themselves with life. It is the

Digitized by Google

custom to speak of those ideas as democratic. The custom seems to me an evil one. Democracy is a very ancient word in the world, and has hitherto borne a definite sense, as descriptive of a system of government well known to the student, whether of ancient Greece or of medieval Europe. But the democracy of Athens or of Florence is one thing. The so-called democracy of modern France is quite another. Whatever may be urged against that Attic democracy, for which Thucydides has put so magnificent an apology into the mouth of Pericles, it was the nurse of individuality, the bulwark of law, the mother of civic virtue. To me, I own, it seems to be, upon the whole, the highest political achievement of the ancient world. In the Italian Republics of the Middle Ages, as I have said in a previous chapter, I recognize the noblest and purest type of national life attained during the Christian era: the realization of Milton's grand idea of a free commonwealth, "where they who are greatest are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at their own charges, neglect their own affairs, yet are not elevated above their brethren, live soberly in their families, walk the streets as other men, and may be spoken to familiarly without adoration." But the so-called democracy of modern France proceeds upon a theory of man and society, at which the Athenian citizen or the Florentine burgher would have stood aghast. What that theory is, and what it is worth, I propose now to consider. And first I would point out that it is a new thing in the actual world. I am, of

Digitized by Google

course, aware that we do find it more or less fully exposed in speculations given to mankind long before the Revolution of 1789. But those speculations were avowedly put forward only (in Milton's phrase) as "Atlantic and Utopian politics, which can never be drawn into use." The polity which rests upon the doctrine, among others, that men by virtue of their nature are equally invested with the sovereignty of the territory in which they happen to be born, is essentially unlike anything that has ever been practically known under the name of democracy. The most democratic State of the ancient world was Athens. But at Athens those who possessed the franchise always greatly outnumbered the slaves and strangers who possessed it not. Florence, at a well-known period of her history, exhibits the most perfect specimen of medieval democracy. But, at Florence, membership of a guild was the qualification for citizenship. There is no more fruitful cause of confusion and mischief than the calling diverse things by the same name. And I marvel much that so careful and judicious a writer as Sir Erskine May has, in his well-known work,[1] fallen into such an error with regard to the present matter. The word by which the ancient Greeks would have designated the French Revolutionary system is not democracy, but ochlocracy, the rule not of the δῆμος or *populus*, but of the ὄχλος or populace. The difference is very real and vital, and it is therefore, and not in the

[1] *Democracy in Europe.*

Digitized by Google

spirit of pedantry, that I designate as ochlocracy the system which is the objectivation of the principles of '89. I have far too high an esteem for true democracy, willingly to call by its name a polity which, in my judgment, is contrary to its most essential features, and fatal to all that is best in it.

I have spoken of the French Revolution as the greatest historical fact of the age in which we live. It is more than that. It is the greatest event in European history since the movement usually called the Renaissance. And its greatness lies in this: that it was not an alteration in the accidental arrange ments, but in the very bases of civil society. This comes out clearly upon comparing it with the English Revolution, which preceded it by a century. There we find merely a vindication of the ancient democratic constitution which our forefathers had brought with them from the forests of Germany; an assertion of immemorial liberties, and a return to the paths of civil polity in which the English people had walked for countless generations. But here there is the entire rejection of the past, and the re-creation of the public order. Our ancestors in 1688 appealed to the laws, to history, to facts.[1] The men of '89 appealed

[1] Of course I am well aware that both Houses of the Convention of 1688 appealed to the Original Compact between the king and the people. But this compact was no mere fiction. It certainly lay at the basis of our old unwritten constitution, the original fact about

Digitized by Google

to philosophical theories, to *à priori* speculation, to ideas. The end sought by the English Convention was, that "all and singular the rights and liberties asserted and declared" in the Statute 1 William and Mary, cap. 1, might be solemnly recognized "as the true ancient and indubitable rights and liberties of the people of this kingdom." The object proposed to itself by the French Constituent Assembly was to make a *tabula rasa* of the past; and, by means of deduction from abstract principles, to reconstruct civil society upon the basis of pure reason; and the practical result of their prolonged[1] labours is *The*

which was the elective character of the monarchy. I do not know who has brought out this so well as Mr. Freeman.

[1] "Je me rappelle," says Dumont, "cette longue discussion qui dura des semaines, comme un temps d'ennui mortel; vaines disputes de mots, fatras métaphysique, bavardage assommant; l'Assemblée s'était convertie en école de Sorbonne," quoted by M. Taine, in *Les Origines de le France Contemporaine*, vol. i. p. 162. Of the method pursued by the Assembly, M. Taine writes as follows:—

"C'est de parti-pris qu'ils renversent le procédé ordinaire. Jusqu'ici on construisait ou l'on reparait une Constitution comme un navire. On procédait par tâtonnements ou sur le modèle des vaisseaux voisins; on souhaitait avant tout que le bâtiment pût naviguer; on subordonnait sa structure à son service; on le faisait tel ou tel selon les matériaux dont on disposait; on commençait par examiner les matériaux; on tâchait d'estimer leur rigidité leur pesanteur et leur résistance.—Tout cela est arriéré, le siècle de la raison est venu, et l'Assemblée est trop éclairée pour se traîner dans la routine. Conformément aux habitudes du temps, elle opère *par déduction* à la manière de Rousseau, d'après une notion abstraite du droit de l'État et du Contrat Social. De cette façon, et par la seule vertu de la géométrie politique, on aura le navire idéal; puisqu'il est idéal, il est sûr qu'il naviguera, et bien mieux que tous les navires empiriques.—Sur ce principe ils légifèrent."—*Ibid.* p. 161.

Digitized by Google

Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen, aptly termed by Von Sybel "a mighty landmark between two ages of the world."[1] It is to this document, therefore, that we must go for an authoritative exposition of the principles of '89; and it will be well, perhaps, to set it out in full. It is as follows:—

"The representatives of the French people constituted in National Assembly, considering that ignorance, forgetfulness, or contempt of the rights of man, are the sole causes of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, have resolved to set forth, in a solemn Declaration, the natural inalienable and sacred rights of man; that this Declaration being constantly present to all the members of the body social, may unceasingly recall to them their rights and their duties; that the acts of the legislative power, and those of the executive power, being capable of being every moment compared with the end of every political institution, may be more respected; that the claims of the citizens, being founded, in future, on simple and incontestable principles, may always tend to the maintenance of the Constitution, and the general happiness.

"For these reasons, the National Assembly recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of the Man and the Citizen:—

"I.—Men are born and continue free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be founded only on common utility.

"II.—The end of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, security, and resistance to oppression.

"III.—The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation; no body, no individual, can exercise authority which does not expressly emanate from it.

"IV.—Liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another.

"V.—The law ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law should not be hindered, and no one can be constrained to do what it does not order.

---

[1] *History of the French Revolution*, book iii. c. 3.

Digitized by Google

"VI.—The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have a right to concur, either personally or by their representatives, in its formation. It should be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all honours, places, and public employments, according to their capacity, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.

"VII.—No man can be accused, arrested, or held in confinement, except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms it has prescribed. All who solicit, promote, execute, or cause to be executed, arbitrary orders, ought to be punished; but every citizen summoned or apprehended by virtue of the law ought immediately to obey; he renders himself culpable by resistance.

"VIII.—The law ought to impose no other penalties than such as are absolutely and evidently necessary; and no one ought to be punished but in virtue of a law established and promulgated before the offence, and legally applied.

"IX.—Every man being presumed innocent till he has been found guilty, whenever his detention becomes indispensable, all rigour towards him, beyond what is necessary to secure his person, ought to be severely repressed by the law.

"X.—No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by the law.

"XI.—The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Every citizen, therefore, may speak, write, and print freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law.

"XII.—A public force being necessary to give security to the rights of the Man and the Citizen, that force is instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the particular benefit of the persons to whom it is entrusted.

"XIII.—A common contribution is indispensable for the support of the public force, and for the expenses of government; it ought to be assessed equally among all the citizens, according to their means.

"XIV.—All citizens have the right, either by themselves or their representatives, to determine the necessity of the public contribution, freely to consent to it, to supervise its employment, to determine its apportionment, assessment, collection and duration.

Digitized by Google

"XV.—The community has a right to demand of every public agent an account of his administration.

"XVI.—Every community in which the guarantee of rights is not assured, nor the separation of powers determined, has no constitution.

"XVII.—All property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of it, save where the public necessity evidently requires it, and on condition of a just and previous indemnity."

Such is the famous *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen;* perhaps the most curious medley of truisms and sophisms, fragments of philosophy and of criminal procedure, literary commonplaces and rhetorical bravuras, the world has ever seen. Its immediate results are best exhibited in M. Taine's great work, which throws such a flood of light upon the actors and events of the French Revolution.[1] The author pictures to us, in his graphic way, the effect produced by these "rights" as proclaimed by the orator of the club or the street. Every article of the *Declaration,* he observes, was a poignard directed against human society. It was only necessary to push the handle in order to drive the blade home. For example, among "the natural and imprescriptible rights" of the Man and the Citizen, is mentioned "resistance to oppression." The Jacobin missionary assures his hearers that they are oppressed, and invites them—nay, it is not he, it is the preamble of the *Declaration* which invites them—to judge for themselves the acts of the legislative and executive power, and to rise in arms. Again, it is laid down

[1] *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine.* I have before me as I write, pp. 275-6 of vol. i.

Digitized by Google

as the right of the community to demand of every public agent an account of his administration. The populace obey the invitation, and proceed to the *hôtel de ville* to interrogate a lukewarm or suspected magistrate; and, if the fancy takes them, to hang him on the nearest lamp-post. Or, once more, there is the proposition that "the law is the expression of the general will." A mob then, as the living law, may supersede the *lex scripta*. All this is not mere play of the imagination. These deductions from the *Declaration* were actually drawn and put into practice throughout France, the result being what M. Taine calls a universal and permanent *jacquerie*. Everywhere in the forty thousand sovereign municipalities into which the country had been divided, "une minorité de fanatiques et d'ambitieux accapare la parole, l'influence, les suffrages, le pouvoir, l'action, et autorise ses usurpations multiplées, son despotisme sans frein, ses attentats croissants, par la Déclaration des droits de l'homme."[1] Exitus acta probat. These fruits of the *Declaration* are a significant commentary upon it. But let us turn to the document itself.

It is not my intention to comment upon the articles of the *Declaration* one by one. To do so would take me too far; nor, as I venture to think,

[1] *Ibid.* p. 279.

Digitized by Google

would such an undertaking be worth the pains that would have to be bestowed upon it. Not, indeed, that I wish to deny or ignore how much there is in the *Declaration* that is unquestionably good: for example, its proclamation of equality before the law, of "la carrière ouverte aux talens," of the death of privilege; its enunciation of the truth—recognized in the Middle Ages as a prime political axiom,[1] but trampled upon by three centuries of Renaissance Cæsarism—that government exists for the benefit of the governed, and that rulers are responsible to the ruled;[2] its police regulations presenting so favourable a contrast to the savage criminal jurisprudence which it superseded, with the hideous *question préparatoire* and other horrors; its vindication, as admirable as inoperative, of the sacredness and inviolability of property. Nor do I deny that other portions of it, dubious as they stand in the text, may be accepted as true, partially, or under conditions. Thus the definition of liberty in Art. IV. may pass, perhaps, if civil liberty alone is meant.[3] But it is obviously an imperfect

[1] Thus the well-known dictum of St. Thomas Aquinas, "Civis regitur in commodum suum, non in commodum magistratus." See also the passage from the *Summa*, quoted in note 3 on the next page.

[2] On this subject Suarez, in a chapter which expresses the teaching of the schools, observes, *inter alia*: "Si rex justam suam potestatem in tyrannidem verteret, illa in manifestam civitatis perniciem abutendo, posset populus naturali potestate ad se defendendum uti: hac enim nunquam se privavit."—*Defensio Fidei Catholicæ*, lib. iii. c. iii.

[3] Bentham, writing from a different point of view from mine, has severely criticised this definition. See Dumont's *Traité de Législation*, page 80 (London University reprint).

Digitized by Google

account of freedom, taken in general, and in all the different senses of the word. Better is the doctrine of George Eliot: "True liberty is nought but the transfer of obedience from the rule of one or of a few men to that will which is the norm or rule for all men."[1] The philosophers of the Constituent Assembly lost sight of the fact that obedience is an essential need of human nature. Again, the definition of law in Art. VI. as "the expression of the general will" is extremely lame; is open, indeed, to precisely the same objection which St. Thomas Aquinas makes to the servile maxim of the Roman jurisconsults: "Quod principi placuit legis vigorem habet:"—namely, that unless the will of the legislator be regulated by reason, "magis esset iniquitas quam lex."[2] And, once more: the right of resistance to oppression, just and salutary within proper limits,[3] if stated in the naked way in

[1] *Felix Holt, the Radical*, chap. 13.

[2] It is well observed by Coleridge, "It is not the actual man, but the abstract reason alone that is the sovereign and rightful lawgiver. The confusion of two things so different is so gross an error, that the Constituent Assembly could hardly proceed a step in their Declaration of Rights without a glaring inconsistency."—*The Friend*, Essay iv.

[3] It seems to me difficult to conceive of juster views on this subject than those expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas. He teaches that a tyrannical government is not a lawful government, and that a general rising against such a government is not sedition, provided it does not involve evils greater than those which it seeks to remedy. He also points out that where the ruler bears sway in virtue of a constitutional pact (and such was the case in most medieval governments, as the coronation offices—our own for example—sufficiently witnessed), breach of that pact entitles his subjects to depose him.

Digitized by Google

which we find it in Article VII., seems perilously like the proclamation of a general right of insurrection. But these, and other provisions, upon which I need not linger, whether good absolutely, or good with limitations and explanations, are—if I may so speak —but of the accidents of the *Declaration*, and are vitiated by the demonstrably false principles which underlie it, and which are of its essence. It is in the Preamble and in the first three Articles that these principles find expression, and they may be summed up in the two following propositions :

"Regimen tyrannicum non est justum, quia non ordinatur ad bonum commune, sed ad bonum privatum regentis, ut patet per philosophum ; et ideo perturbatio hujus regiminis non habet rationem seditionis, nisi forte quando sic inordinate perturbatur tyranni regimen, quod multitudo subjecta majus detrimentum patitur ex perturbatione consequenti quam ex tyranni regimine. Magis autem tyrannus seditiosus est, qui in populo sibi subjecto discordias nutrit et seditiones, ut tutius dominari possit; hoc enim tyrannicum est, cum sit ordinatum ad bonum proprium præsidentis cum multitudinis nocumento."—*Summa*, 2, 2, q. 42, a. 2 ad 3. "Secundum illud Ezech. 22, Principes ejus in medio illius, quasi lupi rapientes prædam ad effundendum sanguinem. Et ideo, sicut licet resistere latronibus, ita licet resistere in tali casu malis principibus, nisi forte propter scandallum vitandum.—*Ibid.* q. 69, a. 4.

"Et quidem si non fuerit excessus tyrannidis utilius est remissam tyrannidem tolerare ad tempus, quam contra tyrannum agendo multis implicari periculis, quae sunt graviora ipsa tyrannide."—*De Regimine Principum*, lib. i. c. 6. "Si ad jus multitudinis alicujus pertineat sibi providere de rege, non injuste ab eadem rex institutus potest destrui, vel refrenari ejus potestas, si potestate regia tyrannice abutatur. Nec putanda est talis multitudo infideliter agere tyrannum destituens, etiamsi eidem in perpetuo se ante subjecerat, quia hoc ipse meruit in multitudinis regimine se non fideliter gerens, ut exigit regis officium, quod ei pactum a subditis non reservetur."—*Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

I. That the true conception of mankind is that of a mass of sovereign human units, by nature free, equal in rights, and virtuous.

II. That civil society rests upon a compact entered into by these sovereign units.

These are the two main propositions upon which the whole *Declaration* hangs. Let us consider them a little, and see what they amount to. They are, of course, derived from the doctrine of Rousseau, the political gospel generally received and believed throughout France in 1789. And it is to the writings of that speculator, and in particular to his *Contrat Social*, that we must go in order to ascertain their true intent.

Rousseau starts, then, from what he calls "a state of Nature," and man in such a state is the unit of his theories; not man in the concrete as he existed in the last century, or as he has existed in any known period of the annals of our race, a member of a living society through which he is bound by manifold obligations, weighted by multiform duties, shaped and moulded by longeval history and immemorial traditions; but man in the abstract, belonging to no age and to no country; unrelated, and swayed only by pure reason; lord of himself, and no more able to alienate this sovereignty, than he is able to divest himself of his own nature. Civil society, Rousseau insists, is purely conventional, the result of a pact between these sovereign individuals, whence results in the public order the collective sovereignty of all. He postulates, as a primary condition of the Social

Digitized by Google

Contract, "l'aliénation totale de chaque associé avec tous ses droits à toute la communauté."[1] He insists, "Chaque membre de la communauté se donne à elle au moment qu'elle se forme, tel qu'il se trouve actuellement, lui et toutes ses forces, dont les biens qu'il possède font partie."[2] He will allow no limits to the authority of this republic of equals. He ascribes to it a universal and compulsory power to order and dispose of each part of the body politic in the manner which it judges to be most to the advantage of all. "As Nature," he writes, "gives to each man absolute authority over his own members, so the social pact gives to the body politic an absolute authority over all its members, and it is this same power which, directed by the general will, bears the name of sovereignty."[3] Hence all rights, that of property among them, exist only by the sufferance of the community, and within the limits prescribed by it. "The right that the individual has over his own possessions (*sur son propre fonds*), is subordinate to the right that the community has over all."[4] And this collective sovereignty, like the individual sovereignty of which it is the outcome, is inalienable. In practice it is exercised through certain delegates, to whom in its fulness it is confided; and these delegates are chosen by all the sovereign units—that is, by a majority of them—and are alike the legislators and the administrators of the community, for sovereignty is indivisible.

[1] *Du Contrat Social*, lib. i. c. 6.
[2] *Ibid.*, c. ix.
[3] *Ibid.*, lib. ii. c. 4.
[4] *Ibid.*, lib. i. c. 9.

Digitized by Google

They wield all the powers of the sovereign units who, in obeying a government thus deriving its authority from themselves, are, in fact, obeying themselves. Such is Jean Jacques' receipt for making the constitution and redressing the woes of humanity. And it must be taken in connection with what Mr. John Morley calls "the great central moral doctrine," held by him, as by the Revolutionary theorists generally, "that human nature is good, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions."[1] Enlighten man as to his "natural and imprescriptible rights," obscured since the days of the state of Nature, restore him to his true position of liberty and equality and sovereignty, and general happiness would result. The whole French Revolution was an endeavour to apply this theory of man and society, to work the world upon it. And in the decomposing political soil into which it was cast, the new doctrine quickly developed. The truest and most consistent disciples of Rousseau were the Jacobins; and it was the emphatic proclamation of the sovereignty of the individual in the *Declaration of Rights* which so endeared that document to them. Marat and Robespierre regarded it as the only good thing achieved by the Constituent Assembly, and the Jacobin orators generally harangued in the same strain. "Le peuple connaît aujourd'hui sa dignité," cries Isnard. "Il sait que d'après la Constitution la dévise de tout Français dôit être celle-ci, vivre libre, l'égal de tout,

[1] Morley's *Diderot*, vol. i. p. 5.

Digitized by Google

et membre du souverain." And so Chalier: "Sachez-vous que vous êtes rois et plus que rois? Ne sentez-vous pas la souveraineté qui circule dans vos veines?" Utterances of this sort were the commonplaces of the Jacobin rhetoricians, "the phrases of pedants," M. Taine judges, "delivered with the violence of energumens." "All their vocabulary," he goes on to observe, "consists of some hundred words, all their ideas may be summed up in one—that of man in the abstract (*l'homme-en-soi*): human units, all alike, equal, independent and contracting for the first time—such is their conception of society."

And now let us survey a little more closely these great principles of '89 regarding man and society, and consider upon what grounds they rest. Rousseau, indeed, and his Jacobin disciples, regarded them as axiomatic and self-evident, and so, as standing in no need of proof. And it must be owned that they were received in this unquestioning spirit by the men of his own generation, and that they are still so received by a vast number of Frenchmen. But it has not been the habit of us Englishmen to take upon trust the doctrines which are to guide us in the grave and important concerns of life. We are accustomed, as Heine noted, to bring facts for the proof —for or against. Let us apply this test to the principles of '89.

Digitized by Google

And, first, of the cardinal principle of the sovereignty of the individual. Are freedom, equality, and virtue his natural heritage? That there is a sense in which it may, with perfect truth, be affirmed that men are born free, I should be the last to deny. But it is a sense very different from that in which the proposition is found in the speculations of Rousseau, and in the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*. It is a familiar position in the writings of the Fathers and the Schoolmen of Christianity that slavery is an unnatural state. "Take man as God at first created him," says St. Augustine, "and he is slave neither to man nor to sin."[1] And again, "the name of slave had not its origin from Nature."[2] In this sense, the proposition that man is born free, is perfectly true: in this sense, but surely in no other. Stated broadly, as Rousseau states it at the opening of the *Contrat Social*—"Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains"—it is opposed, as flatly as is well conceivable, to the most obvious facts of life. Man is born in a state of more entire subjection than any other animal. And by the necessity of the conditions in which his life is passed—I speak of man as he everywhere exists in civil society from its most complex to its simplest states—he is throughout his life subservient, in greater or less measure, to the will of others, from the tutors and governors who sway his childhood and guide his youth, to the nurses and physicians who rule his decrepitude, and preside over

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xix. c. 15. [2] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

his dissolution. I need not enlarge upon so familiar a topic. It must be obvious to all men who will consider the commonest facts of life that man is not born free, and does not continue free.

Not less manifestly false is the assertion that men are born and continue equal in rights. That men exist in a quite startling inequality, whether of natural or adventitious endowments, is one of the things which first force themselves upon the wondering observation of a child; and, certainly, as we go on in life, experience does but deepen our apprehension of that inequality, and of the difference in rights resulting from it, as necessary constituents in the world's order. The natural equality of man, ranging as he does from the Baris of tropical Africa, "abject animals," as Sir Samuel Baker judges, or the Eskimo, described by Sir John Ross as "without any principle or rational emotion," to the saints and sages who are the supreme fruit of spiritual and moral culture! But we need not travel to the Tropics or the Arctic regions for a *reductio ad absurdum* of this thesis. A glance into the streets is sufficient to refute it. No doubt, every individual unit of the motly crowd, as it passes by, has some rights. But who that is not blinded by *à priori* theories will maintain that all have the same rights? Are the rights of the father the same as those of the son? Of the mill-owner the same as those of the factory hand? To look into the streets was indeed the last thing which Rousseau thought of doing. Occupied with the abstractions of

Digitized by Google

the state of Nature, he turned away from the consideration of humanity in the concrete. Still, he might have learnt from the lumbering periods of his master, Locke, that "there is a difference in degrees in men's understandings, apprehensions and reasonings, to so great a latitude, that one may, without doing injury to mankind, affirm that there is a greater difference between some men and others in this respect, than between some men and some beasts."[1] And does the difference in these endowments produce no difference in rights? History, it may be confidently affirmed, contains no more signal example of human credulity than that so startling a paradox as this of man's natural equality, should have been eagerly received by whole nations upon the *ipse dixit* of a crazy sentimentalist. But, indeed, hardly less startling is the doctrine of the unalloyed goodness of human nature. Not a shred of evidence is adducible in support of it. It is certainly not true of man as we find him, at his best, in any period of the world's history of which we have knowledge, and under the conditions of life most favourable to the culture and practice of virtue. Facts, unfortunately, are against the optimist view of humanity, and not only external but internal facts. The sense of moral imperfection is as much a fact of our nature as is the sense of ignorance: and, as it is the wisest who feel most keenly the limitation of their knowledge, so it is the best who are most sensitively conscious of an

[1] *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book iv. c. 20.

Digitized by Google

evil element innate in them. The assertion that "the base in man" is "the fruit of bad education, and of bad institutions" is a perfectly arbitrary and crude hypothesis. There is an overwhelming mass of proof that the *radix mali* is within. External influences may develop or repress it; but it is always there. We may give what account of it we please, or we may put aside as untenable any account that can be given of it. But, apart from all theories, the fact remains—that there is in all of us something of "the ape and tiger," which is not in the least cast out by ignoring or denying it. As a fact, men are no more born good, than they are born equal and free. The theory of their natural sanctity is as baseless as the theory of their natural sovereignty.

So much as to the great principle of '89 regarding the individual. Let us now pass to the doctrine of the Revolutionists regarding civil society. Is the public order the result of a contract between a multitude of unrelated units? To put the question is to answer it. There is no instance on record, in any age, or in any country, of a number of men saying to one another, "Go to: let us enter into a social contract and found a state." Pacts there may be in abundance in the public order. For example, as I have observed, the monarchies of medieval Europe usually rested upon pacts; which, indeed, is natural enough, seeing that they were, for the most part, the outcome of the elective sovereignty described by Tacitus as prevailing among such of the

Digitized by Google

Teutonic tribes as had kings. But of civil society the true account is "nascitur, non fit." It is not a cunningly devised machine, but an organism, not the hasty fabrication of crude theorists, but the slow growth of countless centuries. I shall have to touch upon this point again. Here, it is enough to say that the conception of Rousseau and of the older speculators from whom he so largely "conveyed" as to the contractual nature of civil society, is historically false. It is only in a very limited and restricted sense that a pact can properly be spoken of as the foundation of the public order; in such a sense, for example, as that in which St. Augustine uses the word when he speaks of "obedience to rulers" as being "the general pact of society."[1] It is true when employed thus, in a figure. It is false in the literal sense in which it was used by Rousseau and the Jacobins. Wholly false, as involving a negation of the great truth that civil society is the normal state[2] of men, and not the result of convention.

But, it may be urged that the principles of '89,

[1] "Generale quippe pactum est societatis humanæ obedire regibus suis."—*Confess.* lib. iii. c. 8. I do not know whether Lord Tennyson had this passage in view when he wrote in the *Morte d'Arthur*—

"Seeing obedience is the bond of rule."

[2] Thus Aristotle calls man ζῷον πολιτικόν—a phrase not easily translated into English in the present degradation of the word "politics."

Digitized by Google

though false in fact, are serviceable fictions: that the doctrine of individual sovereignty, if not true, may be accepted as a convenient starting-point in the science of politics: that men, if not in strictness free and equal and good, may, for practical purposes, be so accounted. It may be well to consider this argument. No philosophical student of human institutions would now deny that, in a certain stage of legal or political development, fictions are useful, nay, as it would seem, indispensable expedients for the progress of society. Are the fictions known as "the principles of '89" of this kind?

To answer that question, let us consider what the progress of European society really is. It may be described as consisting in the evolution of the individual. Among our Aryan ancestors, in the earliest stages known to us of their social organization, we find neither personal liberty, nor its most characteristic incident, single ownership. The unit of the public order is not the individual, but the family, whose head exercises despotic power over its members. Not several, but common possession, is the form in which property is held. For long ages the unemancipated son differed nothing from a slave. The history of Western civilization, whatever else it may be, is certainly the history of the growth of personal liberty and private property. And the two things are most intimately connected, for property is but liberty realized. This has been admirably stated by a distinguished French publicist, with whom it is

Digitized by Google

always a pleasure to me to find myself in agreement. "Property, if you go back to its origin," writes M. Laboulaye, "is nothing else than the product of a man's activity, a creation of wealth which has taken nothing from any one else, and which, therefore, owes nothing to any one else, and belongs only to him and his descendants, for it is for them that he works."[1] And again: "Liberty and property are like the tree and the fruit." As a matter of fact, it is certain that the two things rose and developed together, under the fostering protection of the civil order. It has been profoundly observed by Kant, that "in society man becomes more a man." Or, as Spinosa puts it, more exactly to the present purpose, "the end of the State is liberty, that man should in security develop soul and body, and make free use of his reason." It is towards the attainment of this "far off event" that the public order has moved through countless ages. And nothing has more subserved its onward march than the employment of fictions, the object of which is that existing institutions should be accommodated to fresh exigencies; that the new should succeed the old without solution of continuity; that "the change which comes" should "be free to ingroove itself with that which flies." To Sir Henry Maine belongs the credit of having been the first among English thinkers to bring out clearly this great truth. And he has expressed it with a force and authority peculiarly his own. "It is not difficult," he writes, "to understand

[1] *Le Parti Libéral*, p. 33.

Digitized by Google

why fictions in all their forms are particularly congenial to the infancy of society. They satisfy the desire for improvement, which is not quite wanting; at the same time they do not offend the superstitious disrelish for change which is always present. At a particular stage of social progress, they are invaluable expedients for overcoming the rigidity of the law; and indeed, without one of them, the Fiction of Adoption, which permits the family tie to be artificially created, it is difficult to understand how society would ever have escaped from its swaddling-clothes."[1] Certainly not less valuable, I may observe, as an instrument of progress was the fictitious triple sale resorted to at so early a period in the history of Rome for getting rid of the *patria potestas* and emancipating the *filius familias*. But I must not dwell upon this subject. Enough has been said to indicate the true goal of the progressive societies of the Western world—the evolution of the individual—and the nature and importance of the part played in the process by fictions.

But the fictions embodied in the teaching of Rousseau, and in the principles of '89, are by no means of this kind. They are not "assumptions which conceal, or affect to conceal, the fact that a rule of law has undergone alteration, its letter remaining unchanged, its operation being modified:" economical expedients whereby the innate conservatism of human nature is conciliated towards inevitable innovations; wise condescensions to men's feelings and prejudices

[1] *Ancient Law*, p. 26.

Digitized by Google

in order to the peaceful reconciliation of permanence with progression. They are something very different from this. They are a set of falsehoods presented as truths, to serve as the basis for a total reconstruction of the public order. And their practical effect is not to carry on the progress of human society, but to throw it back indefinitely: not to develop the work which has been the slow growth of so many centuries, but to lay the axe to the root of it: not, in a word, to promote the evolution of individuality, but to destroy it. This may sound a hard saying. I am convinced that it is a true one. I proceed to show why.

And, first, let me say, roundly, that these principles of '89 are fatal to liberty. They make the individual nominally free and a king, it is true. They mean, in fact, the unchecked domination of the State. A multitude of independent and equal units —equal in rights and equal in political power— obviously, is not a nation. It is a chaos of sovereign individuals. It is the State which, by virtue of the fictitious social contract, welds them into a community. And the State, invested with their full sovereignty, becomes omnipotent. This, as we have seen, is insisted upon by Rousseau, who no sooner salutes the "Man and the Citizen" as king, than he proceeds to impose upon him a blind abnegation of all the powers of royalty, and replaces individual action by the action of the State. The consolation of the man and the citizen is to be found in the reflection, that if the State is above him—the State

Digitized by Google

and its functionaries, for of course the State is a mere abstraction—no one else is; and that, by virtue of his nature, he is a member of the sovereign despotic authority whose sovereignty is, in effect, his sovereignty. It is a poor consolation, even on paper. It is poorer still in practice. For, in practice, this doctrine of popular sovereignty is the sovereignty of "the majority told by head," as Burke expresses it,—the very class to which ancient and medieval democracy denied any political power whatever—whom all men are required to believe and confess to be their perpetual, natural, unceasing, indefeasible ruler. But this really means the untempered sway of the delegates of the majority; or, to get a step farther, of the wirepullers, who are not usually among the "choice specimens of wisdom and virtue" that adorn our race. Let us clear our minds of cant, for to do so is the beginning of political wisdom, and consider the sovereign units as life actually presents them: as we know them by the evidence of our senses. The world is not peopled by the wise and virtuous abstractions of Rousseau's theories, but by beings whose inclinations towards good are, at the best, but weak and intermittent: whose passions are usually strong, and who are prone to gratify them at the expense of others: who are, for the most part, feeble in reasoning power, even to perceive the things that are more excellent, feebler still in will to follow after such things: "bibulous clay" too often: good judges, possibly, of the coarser kinds of alcoholic stimulants,

Digitized by Google

but not skilled in discerning between good and evil in higher matters, to which, indeed, the "one or two rules that in most cases govern all their thoughts" (as Locke speaks) do not extend. I do not know who has better characterized "the masses," as the phrase is, than George Eliot, in what, perhaps, of all the works given to the world by her inimitable pen, is the richest in political wisdom :—

"Take us working men of all sorts. Suppose out of every hundred who had a vote there were thirty who had some soberness, some sense to choose with, some good feeling to make them wish the right thing for all. And suppose there were seventy out of the hundred who were, half of them, not sober, who had no sense to choose one thing in politics more than another, and who had so little good feeling in them that they wasted on their own drinking the money that should have helped to clothe their wives and children; and another half of them who, if they didn't drink, were too ignorant, or mean, or stupid, to see any good for themselves better than pocketing a five-shilling piece when it was offered them. Where would be the political power of the thirty sober men? The power would lie with the seventy drunken and stupid votes; and I'll tell you what sort of men would get the power, what sort of men would end by returning whom they pleased to Parliament. They would be men who would undertake to do the business for a candidate, and return him; men who have no real opinions, but who pilfer the words of every opinion, and turn them into a cant which will serve their purpose at the moment; men who look out for dirty work to make their fortunes by, because dirty work wants little talent and no conscience; men who know all the ins and outs of bribery, because there is not a cranny in their own souls where a bribe can't enter. Such men as these will be the masters wherever there's a majority of voters who care more for money, more for drink, more for some mean little end which is their own and nobody else's, than for anything that has been called Right in the world."[1]

[1] *Felix Holt the Radical*, c. xxx.

Digitized by Google

No one possessing any practical knowledge of the classes which form the great majority in every country, as they are, and as—human nature being what it is—they will probably ever be, can honestly say that the picture of them thus drawn by Felix Holt is too darkly coloured.[1] No one who has attentively considered the actual working of universal suffrage in the world can fail to discern (however loth he may be to make the confession) that the description of "the sort of men" who "get the power" by means of it, is simply true. It was long ago pointed out by Aristotle that the tyrant, whether one or many-headed, is the natural prey of his parasites: "demagogues and Court favourites are the same and correspond." And, he further observes, "the ethos of monarchical despotism and of mob despotism is identical; both are tyrannously repressive of the better sort."[2] Moreover, the instrument whereby this tyranny is exercised is the same in both cases—a hierarchy of functionaries, a highly centralized administration. Absolute equality is impossible. The voice of human nature spoke by the mouth of that Irishman, who, in answer to the stump orator's appeal, "Is not one man as good as another?" called out, "Yes, and much better, too." And, when all other superiorities are

[1] Mr. J. S. Mill goes much further. "Consider," he writes, "how vast is the number of men in any great country who are little better than brutes."—*The Subjection of Women*, p. 64. Aristotle said precisely the same thing two thousand years ago.

[2] *Pol.*, lib. vi. c. 4.

Digitized by Google

wanting, official superiority gives rise to the most odious of privileged orders; an order possessing all the vices of an aristocracy, and none of its virtues. Burke remarks, with profound wisdom, "The deceitful dreams and visions of equality and the rights of man, end in a base oligarchy" —of all oligarchies most fatal to liberty. One has but to look at France for an example. It is now well-nigh a century since the principles of '89 were formulated there. But in no country, not even in Russia, is individual freedom less. The State is as ubiquitous and as autocratic as under the worst of Bourbon or Oriental despots. Nowhere is its hand so heavy upon the subject in every department of human life. Nowhere is the negation of the value and the rights of personal independence more absolute, more complete, and more effective. Rivarol observes that his countrymen judged liberty to lie in restricting the liberties of others. And M. Gambetta is reported to have declared, upon a memorable occasion, that it is "one of the prerogatives of power." The declaration is in full accord with the constant teaching of the Jacobin publicists, who have ever maintained that the will of the majority is the rule of right, and that dissent from it is a crime; and have branded with the name of "individualism" all that is most precious in what we call "civil and religious liberty." Centralization, the fanaticism of uniformity, the worship of brute force, and contempt of all that Englishmen under-

Digitized by Google

stand by the venerable phrase, "the rights of the subject"—in a word, the effacement of the individual—such is the natural, the inevitable outcome of the principles of '89, whether in the stage of ochlocracy or in the further stage of Revolutionary Cæsarism, which is only ochlocracy crowned. If ever there was a safe truth, it is this: that the enforced and unnatural equality of Rousseau and his disciples is the death of personal liberty.

But this is not all. Something still remains to be said about the working of this fiction of equality, which, as Heine's keen eyes discerned, is the real ruling principle of the Revolution. It has been pointed out by the great master of the political wisdom of antiquity, whose doctrine, based as it is upon a profound knowledge of human nature, is "not of an age, but for all time," that those who are equal in political power soon come to think that they should be equal in everything else.[1] They very soon come to think so. And the inequality most deeply felt is that of property. Of what avail to tell the Man and the Citizen that he is equal in rights to the greatest potentate on earth, when he is sansculottic and empty? Surely the Jacobins were well warranted in declaring that equality was a delusion so long as the majority of Frenchmen possessed nothing. "Either stifle the people, or pay them," urges Marat in the *Ami du Peuple*, pleading, as he was wont to do, for the

[1] *Pol.*, lib. viii. c. 1, 2.

Digitized by Google

"re-establishment of the holy law of Nature." So Chaumette: "We have destroyed the nobles and the Capets, but there is still an aristocracy to be overthrown, the aristocracy of the rich." Tallien, in like manner, proposed that the owners of property should be "sent to the dungeons as public thieves." While Armand (de la Meuse), going further, demanded mental equality, without stating, however (unless my memory is at fault), how he proposed to enforce it. St. Just constantly denounced opulence as a crime. Barrère greatly distinguished himself by invectives against "the pretended right of private property." And it was upon the motion of Robespierre that the four famous resolutions affirming the necessity of limiting by law the amount of individual possessions, were passed by the Jacobin Club. "La propriété est le vol" is the necessary corollary of the proposition that men are born and continue equal in rights. Babeuf and Proudhon are the legitimate successors and continuators of Rousseau and his disciples, the legislators of '89. As we have seen, it is laid down in the *Contrat Social* that every one entering into the fictitious pact which is postulated as the basis of the public order gives himself to the community of which he is to form one, wholly; "lui et toutes ses forces, dont les biens qu'il possède font partie;" the effect being that henceforth his title to his possessions is derived from the State, which legitimates what had been before mere usurpation.[1] And Rousseau adds

[1] "La communauté ne fait que leur en assurer la légitime

Digitized by Google

that "the right which each individual has to his own property (*sur son propre fonds*) is subordinate to the right which the community has over all;" and that "*the social state is of advantage to men only so long as all have something, and no one too much.*"[1] Babeuf declares that this last proposition is the elixir of the *Contrat Social.* But it does not stand alone. It may be paralleled from other writings of Rousseau; from the *Discours sur l'Inégalité* for example, in which the famous passage occurs, "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, ventured to say, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. From what crimes, what wars, what murders, what miseries, what horrors would not any one have delivered the human race, who, snatching away the stakes, and filling up the ditches, had cried to his fellows, 'Don't listen to that impostor; you are lost if you forget that the produce of the soil belongs to everybody, and the soil to nobody.'" I am well aware that saner views, irreconcilable with these, are from time to time expressed by Rousseau, whose speculations, indeed, are as full of inconsistencies and contradictions as the ravings of a lunatic. But my present point is that these views are closely, nay, necessarily, linked to the doctrine of equality. For equality of rights ought

possession; changer l'usurpation en un véritable droit et la jouissance en propriété."—*Du Contrat Social*, lib. i. c. 9.

[1] "L'état social n'est avantageux aux hommes qu'autant qu'ils ont tous quelque chose, et qu'aucun d'eux n'a rien de trop."—*Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

to result in equality of fact. Mere equality before the law is maintained by Babeuf—and with reason, if the principles of '89 are to be accepted—to be "a mere conditional equality, a hypocritical pretence, a sterile fiction." Thus we are landed in Socialism, Communism, Nihilism—systems which, under the pretence of abolishing "the slavery of labour," make all men slaves alike. The individual is effaced. Art and science, anathematized by Rousseau as the curses of mankind, and all the essential constituents of civilization, disappear together with the inequality of which they are the fruit. And the human race is thrown back to a condition lower than that in which we find it at the dawn of history. It is the triumph of Materialism in the public order: "chaos come again."

So much may suffice regarding the principles which are of the essence of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, as distinguished from the provisions, salutary or questionable, which may be regarded as the accidents of that document. The liberty which they bestow upon the world is a hollow pretence,

> "the name
> Of Freedom graven on a heavier chain."

The equality is, as has been happily said, *une égalité*

Digitized by Google

par voie d'abaissement, absolutely fatal to human progress. But there is another great principle, usually ascribed to the year 1789, that has been added to Liberty and Equality, to make up a sort of sacramental formula, the principle of Fraternity, concerning which I ought perhaps to say a word. In strictness, indeed, this shibboleth belongs to a later period. It was not, I think, until late in 1791 that it became current. It appears to have been put in circulation by the Abbé Fauchet, the orator of the *Cercle Social*, a Club of Freemasons, who desired, as they professed, to promote "the universal federation of the human race," and who, with a view of hastening that consummation, published a journal called *La Bouche de Fer*. For some two years the Abbé discoursed in this newspaper, and at the meetings of the *Cercle*, "upon the mysteries of Nature and Divinity," especially devoting himself to the elucidation of Rousseau's proposition, that "all the world should have something, and nobody too much." He was guillotined in 1793, and seems to have considered Catholicism a better religion to die in than Freemasonry, for we are informed that "he made his confession, and heard the confession of Sillery, Comte de Genlis, who was executed at the same time with him." But his catchword, as we all know, has survived him, and at the present day does duty as the third article of the Revolutionary symbol. It must be allowed to be a sonorous vocable, which surely—as the world goes—is something considerable. The old Marquis de

Digitized by Google

Mirabeau remarks, in his character of Friend of Man, I suppose, "Ce sont deux animaux bien bêtes, que l'homme et le lapin, une fois qu'ils sont pris par les oreilles." The Jacobins have ever understood this truth; and have, from the first, been great proficients in the art of leading men by the ears. And the French people have displayed an extreme aptitude for being so led. Fraternity has served admirably to round off the Revolutionary formula. But I do not remember ever to have seen a clear account of what it is taken to mean. Looking at man as a mere sentient animal apart from theological considerations, which, of course, is the Jacobin point of view, there is exactly the same ground for talking of human brotherhood as of canine or equine. Thus regarded, it does not appear to be of much moment, or fitted to elicit much enthusiasm. Nor, if we consider it as practised by the Jacobins, is it a thing to win or to exhilarate us, resembling, as it does, very closely, the fraternity of Cain and Abel, according to the testimony of Chamfort, who tasted of it in its first fervour. There is a somewhat grotesque passage in one of M. Taine's volumes which may serve to show how it was apprehended by the masses. At Ribérac, we read, the village tailor acted as the director of the mob who were engaged in sacking the neighbouring *châteaux*. Drawing from his pocket *The Catechism of the Constitution*, he proceeded to confute therewith the Procureur-Syndic, and to prove that the marauders were only exercising the rights of the Man and the

Digitized by Google

Citizen. "For, in the first place," he argued, "it is said in the book that the French are equal and *brothers*, and ought to help one another. Ergo, the masters ought to share with us, especially in this bad year. In the second place, it is written that all goods belong to the nation, which was the very ground upon which the nation appropriated the goods of the Church. But the nation is composed of all Frenchmen. Whence the conclusion is clear." "In the eyes of the tailor," as M. Taine observes, "since the goods of individual Frenchmen belonged to all the French, he, the tailor, had a right to his share."[1] This example may serve sufficiently to show the practical working of the doctrine of Fraternity. But before I pass on, I would make another remark upon it. Its originator, the Abbé Fauchet, was an apostate priest. And, no doubt, we have in it an echo of the Catholic doctrine which he had taught during the earlier portion of his life, and to which he turned for consolation in the face of death. The dogma of the brotherhood of Christians is at the very foundation of the idea of the Catholic Church. Every baptized person is held to be gifted with a divine sonship, and that common spiritual generation is regarded as the bond of the Christian family, and supplies an argument whereon the duty of charity to our neighbour is especially grounded. Property is conceived of in Catholic theology as being rather a trust than a possession. St. Edmund of Canterbury, in his

[1] *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, vol. i. p. 383.

Digitized by Google

Mirror, one of the most popular religious works in medieval England, lays it down broadly that the rich can be saved only through the poor. And the well-known saying of the great Apostle of "holy poverty," St. Francis of Assisi, when bestowing a cloak which had been given him, upon a poor man, "I had a right to keep it only until I should find some one poorer than myself," expresses forcibly the way of looking at worldly wealth prevalent in the Middle Ages. "Humanum paucis vivit genus," is the stern law of life, as it ever has been, and ever must be. But never has its sternness been so tempered as by the Catholic doctrine of Fraternity. So, too, Liberty and Equality are strictly Christian ideas. Men who, in fact, are not free, nor equal in rights, by birth, are, according to the Catholic conception, invested with the attributes of freedom and equality by the faith of Christ. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty."[1] "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." "Ye are all the children of God."[2] Hence results a theory of the sovereignty of the individual Christian, and something more indeed, for *sacerdotium* is attributed to him as well as *imperium*. He is held to be both a priest and a king.[3] I need not dwell further upon this matter. I touch upon it to indicate the source whence Rousseau

[1] *Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, c. iii. v. 27.
[2] *Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, c. iii. v. 28, 29.
[3] *Apocalypse*, c. i. v. 6.

Digitized by Google

really derived the notions which blend so strangely and incongruously with the naturalism, and, if I may so speak, sublimated materialism, that are of the essence of his speculations. In the Gospel according to Jean Jacques, Man takes the place of God, for I suppose no human being ever believed in the *Être Suprême* therein proclaimed; not even in that culminating hour of the new Deity's career, when Robespierre, after causing his existence to be solemnly decreed by the National Convention, pontificated at his Fête, "in sky-blue coat, made for the occasion, white silk waistcoat broidered with silver, black silk breeches, white stockings, and shoebuckles of gold." It is true that the legislators of '89 made a sort of bow to him in their *Declaration*. It was under his "auspices," whatever that may mean, that they placed the rights of the Man and the Citizen. But we hear little more about him from that time until the great day of the Robespierrean function. The Abbé Fauchet roundly declared, in a moment of lyrical enthusiasm,

"L'homme est Dieu: connais-toi! Dieu, c'est la vérité."

So Anacharsis Clootz, "the orator of the human race:" "The people is the Sovereign of the world, it is God." Hence it is, I suppose, that some writers have reckoned Atheism among the principles of 1789. For myself, I am hardly prepared to say so much, although there can be no doubt that the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people does, as a matter of fact, lead to the apotheosis of the mob, and to the

Digitized by Google

application to it of the maxim, "Vox populi, vox Dei."

I think, then, I may claim to have shown that the principles of '89 are neither great truths nor serviceable fictions, but palpable sophisms, fraught with the most terrible mischief; neutralizing what there is of good in the famous *Declaration* in which they are authoritatively embodied, and rendering it what Burke pronounced it to be, "a sort of institute or digest of anarchy." But I would further remark that the master-error of the Constituent Assembly was in dealing with abstract principles at all. With reason did Mirabeau—the chief representative there of the Voltairean or common-sense school—warn his colleagues that "liberty was the fruit, not of a doctrine worked out in philosophic deductions, but of every-day experience." Prophetic words, indeed, and better warranted by history than the speaker, most probably, was aware of. For, if any lesson stands out more clearly than another in human annals it is this: that facts, experience, experiment, not theories, imagination, deduction, are the true guides in politics. The objects of a statesman's solicitude should be not the *individuum vagum*, Man; but the real men and women of his country, as they live and move and have their being in their several callings, and classes, and communities. The general rights of British or French

Digitized by Google

subjects, or the particular rights of any class or individual among them, are capable of being determined, for they depend upon positive law. We know their history, their present condition, their relations to the rights of others; and, by careful observation and mature reflection and cautious tentatives, we may, with approximate accuracy, determine in what direction and to what extent they are capable of extension and improvement. With the rights of Man it is otherwise. They are, as the phrase is, "matter of opinion," and of widely-varying opinion. For right reposes upon, and indeed flows out of, duty. It is duty that makes man a moral being. And duty and right are merely different aspects of the same moral law. But what is that law? and whence and where is its sanction? The student of ethics may choose for himself, from the Babel of answers returned to these questions, such as most commend themselves to his judgment or his tastes. This, however, is clear —that whatever the rights of Man may or may not be, they certainly are not such as Rousseau alleged. His teaching concerning them is demonstrably false. And it is a remark of his own—one of the luminous observations which from time to time relieve, as by a lightning flash, the dreariness of his sophisms—"If the legislature establish a principle at variance with that which results from the nature of things, the State will never cease to be agitated until that principle has been changed, and invincible Nature has resumed her empire." These are the words of truth and

Digitized by Google

soberness. And the whole history of France—and of that portion of Continental Europe most largely influenced by France—from the day they were written until now supplies a singularly emphatic corroboration of them. In England, happily, it is otherwise. The political theories of the French Revolution failed to commend themselves to any considerable number of us when they were first broached; nor are they now in any great credit in this country, although strongly recommended to the British public by the enthusiastic admiration of several admirable writers, and by the more reserved and limited approval of one notable thinker. Mr. Mill apparently adopted the doctrine of the sovereignty of the individual, although he sought to fence it round with safeguards and checks. He assented, too—for practical purposes, but clearly without interior conviction—to an optimist view of mankind, not differing substantially from Rousseau's; he speaks[1] of "society in equality" as "the normal state of human life;" and he looked forward to a day when moral suasion would take the place of force as the sanction of law, when "the relation of command and obedience" would disappear from the world. The great defect of this illustrious man was that he was in the habit of seeing truth and justice in the nakedness of abstractions. Of actual life, of human nature in the concrete, he knew but little. A student from his youth, he lived in a little world of his own, shut off from the hopes and fears, the passions and emotions,

[1] See his *Subjection of Women*, p. 79.

Digitized by Google

which sway the lives of ordinary men. It would be an insult to his revered memory to compare him, with his severely disciplined intellect and lofty ideals, to such a charlatan as Rousseau. But the two had this in common—that their conception of humanity was but the projection of themselves, the objectivation of their subjectivity. Still, even the authority of Mr. Mill, and of the disciples who follow him, "haud passibus æquis," has not gone far to discredit the constitutional forms and doctrines, however rude and unscientific, which guard the freedom purchased for us by a thousand years of patient toil and heroic endeavour. We have passed through political changes of the highest importance and of the most momentous character during this century—changes so great that the Duke of Wellington judged even such of them as he lived to see to amount to "a revolution by due course of law." But the qualification, "by due course of law," makes all the difference. As a matter of fact, the most important reforms which have been effected in our institutions have been essentially a return to the spirit of the medieval democracy—I use the term advisedly—whence they came. Thus, the great measure by which the rights of burgesses were vindicated was practically a restitution of the municipal liberties of the Middle Ages,[1] eclipsed under Tudor and Stuart tyranny; while the household suffrage adopted in the great Acts of 1867

[1] See Sir Erskine May's very just remarks in the fifteenth chapter of his *Constitutional History*.

Digitized by Google

and 1884—the necessary complement of the statute which, in 1832, gave new life to British freedom—was "a return to an ancient franchise known to the Constitution."[1] But these and other improvements in our laws and polity have not been effected in the spirit of Rousseau and his disciples, nor in vindication of any supposed rights of an imaginary Man and Citizen. "They were made slowly, temperately, and with caution. They were preceded by laborious inquiries, by discussion, experiments, and public conviction."[2] They are a development of old and tried constitutional doctrines: not a deduction from abstract principles. They have made no breach in that continuity of national life, which it is hardly possible to overvalue. They have not dissolved the monarchy into a chaos of sovereign individuals, withheld by the heavy hand of an ubiquitous State from internecine war. They have not severed the old historic ligaments of the public order to make way for a spurious social contract. Nor have they uprooted the majestic growth of English freedom, in order that we may plant in its room a tree of liberty *à la Française*. It is precisely because we possess—

> "Some reverence for the laws ourselves have made,
> Some patient force to change them when we will,
> Some civic manhood firm against the crowd,"

that we are—

> "A nation yet; the rulers and the ruled."

---

[1] May's *Constitutional History*. Supplementary chapter in the sixth edition, vol. iii. p. 442.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 421.

Digitized by Google

What, then, is a nation? I am well aware of the danger of definitions, and, moreover, I have the fear of Mr. Freeman before my eyes; but, following that authoritative scholar,[1] who has taught us all so much upon this subject, I would say that as a matter of fact a nation is the development of the family. Whatever may be the origin of civil society, its historical stages certainly are the patriarchal group, the *gens*, the tribe, the nation. The starting-point is consanguinity: the instrument of expansion adoption, using the word in its loosest sense: the chief practical tests available in this age are local contiguity and community of language. So much would seem to be clear. But what I am here specially concerned to point out is that a nation is a real and organic entity; not, as Rousseau and the men of '89 supposed, a fortuitous *congeries* of unrelated human units mechanically kept together. It is a body politic, with a life of its own, independent of the lives of the individuals who compose it, vivified by law, which is in a true sense its soul, and bearing to its constituent human atoms much the same relation as that which is borne by a man to the fleeting particles in succession vitally united to him. The individuals perish, but the nation lives; endowed, indeed, with a kind of immortality in which they share. For "the act of a public society of men done five hundred years since standeth as theirs who presently are of the same societies. . . . .

[1] See especially his *Comparative Politics* and the paper on *Race and Language* in the third series of his *Historical Essays.*

Digitized by Google

We were then alive in our predecessors, and they in their successors do live still." [1] Of course this analogy between individual and national life, like all analogies, may be pressed too far. But it certainly holds good in one point very pertinent to my present subject. The Philosopher writes, "As the eye, and the hand, and the foot, and each of the various members, evidently has its office, so, besides and beyond all this, there must be assigned an office to the man as such." [2] The same is true of the social organism. As the various individuals and classes of individuals who compose it have their several functions, so has the nation, of which they form part, its proper function. And as the function of the man, as such, is held to be "an active life, or activity of the soul in accordance with reason," so we may say, in the words previously cited from Spinosa, that "the end of the State is liberty, that its citizens should in security develop soul and body, and make free use of their reason." But the State, as Burke somewhere expresses it, is simply "the nation in its corporate capacity." And the best form of the State at any period of a nation's history—for there is no immutably best form—is that which in the circumstances of the age best represents the nation for the purpose of this great end: which renders available its collective energy and intelligence for the defence and advancement of individual freedom. A keen observer

[1] Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book i. c. 10.
[2] *Nic. Eth.*, Book i. c. 7.

Digitized by Google

of human nature has remarked, "All men taken singly are more or less selfish, and taken in bodies they are intensely so." The great end of statecraft practically amounts then to this—to give due place in the government, according to their importance, to the various jarring influences which make up society, and to guard against the undue preponderance of any. In the Middle Ages this was roughly done by the representation in the national councils of the "Estates of the Realm." The term has to a large extent lost its meaning in the greater complexity of modern Europe civilization. The words Spiritualty, Nobility, and Commonalty by no means suffice to designate the classes which now go to make up the combination and subordination of civil life—classes which, from their very number and difference, are the great bulwarks of liberty, because they are the great factors of individualization. To vest absolute power in any one class is to inflict a monstrous injury upon the rest, and upon the whole community. But most fatal of all errors is the unchecked domination of the numerical majority, who must be, of necessity, the set of men least qualified to exercise it. It is profoundly observed by Maine de Biran—"The sovereignty of the people corresponds in politics to the supremacy of passions and sensations in philosophy and morals."[1] No doubt passions and sensations ought to be represented in the public order. If you ignore them, you ignore a large and most

[1] Maine de Biran: *Sa Vie et ses Pensées*, p. 58.

Digitized by Google

potent force in man. You cannot, indeed, ignore them. But if you give them absolute sway, the result inevitably is the deepest slavery. No proposition could be falser than that the numerical majority is the nation. Not only is it not the nation, but it is not even the most considerable element in the nation; and to treat it as if it were, is the surest way to ostracize the best and noblest, and to turn what should be the collective wisdom of the country into its collective folly—the natural prey of the charlatans, who trade in that spurious patriotism aptly described as "the last refuge of a scoundrel." Mr. Gladstone has pointed out that the Parliamentary constitution of our fathers, including as it did "every variety of franchise from pure nomination by an individual down or up to household suffrage, . . . made an admirable provision for diversity of elements, for the representation of mind, for the political training from youth of the most capable material of the country." It is gone, that old machinery. It was impossible to retain it, for it had had its day, and had become inadequate for its purpose. But in the preservation of its spirit, by whatever different methods and under whatever new forms, lies the only security for rational freedom, and for that stability of government which is the essential condition of freedom. To obtain such a representation of the nation as shall be the nation in miniature, and shall truly present for the greatest advantage of the community its wealth, its industries,

Digitized by Google

its numerical strength, its culture, its traditions—in a word, all the constituent elements which make it what it is—such is the problem which a people has to face and to solve from time to time, for there is no finality in politics. That we shall ever attempt to solve it upon the principles of '89, I take leave to disbelieve. I disbelieve it for many reasons, of which I will give here only one, but one which is to my mind conclusive. It is this: that the English nation differs as widely as is well conceivable in habits, instincts, aspirations—in a word, in inborn character—from the people of France, either as they were a hundred years ago or as they are to-day; and that this difference necessarily leads to an entirely different view of political questions. The French of the eighteenth century had forgotten to be free; and hence it is that their Revolution presents all the worst characteristics of a servile insurrection. The tyranny which culminated under Louis XIV., and which found in that monarch its most perfect type, had overthrown and crushed every instrument and tradition of liberty throughout France. The nobility, from the peers of the sovereign, had been degraded into his lackeys. The clergy, bound hand and foot by the fetters of the so-called Gallican liberties, had ceased to wear even the semblance of an independent order, and had sunk, in the general estimate, from the champions of popular right into the familiars of Absolutism. The old municipal liberties and local immunities which for ages had been the fortresses of

Digitized by Google

freedom, had disappeared before that huge system of centralization, still in full vigour, which has converted the inhabitants of France into what one of their publicists has well called "un peuple d'administrés prêts pour la dictature." No delusion is greater than that so widely current in the present day, that the aptitudes and habits of self-government are an essential part of man's nature. They are not congenital, but acquired, and that by a slow and painful process. Yes, the education of a nation in civic freedom is a long and difficult discipline. And to plunge a people who have not received that discipline, or have forgotten it, into so-called "representative institutions" is like throwing into the sea a man who does not know how to swim. It is the happiness of us Englishmen, that in a true sense (not the sense of the men of '89) we are "born free." The balance of mind, the political instincts, the public sense, which are engendered by ages of self-government, are our inheritance —the inheritance, not of particular sections of the community, but of the nation; for, as Mr. Grote well observed, "the English mind is much of one pattern, take whatsoever class you will." We know that society cannot be a dead level of equality; that it is necessarily a hierarchy; and we prefer an aristocracy of wealth and rank, open to all, to an oligarchy of placemen; for, after all, wealth and rank are but realized liberty. And possibly a dim apprehension of that fact has much to do with the veneration for a millionnaire, the love of a lord, which are such well-

Digitized by Google

marked traits in the English character. However that may be, it is certain that fortune and family exercise as potent an influence in modern England as they exercised in ancient Athens. There is no fear that in a country penetrated as ours is with the spirit of inequality and competition, riches and high social position will not wield their due power. The real danger is the other way. And it is precisely upon that account that the wide Parliamentary suffrage which prevails among us is not only safe, but a safeguard—the best pledge of public security. Its ordinary depositary may not be, indeed, from the nature of things, cannot be, very wise; but even when he is least wise he has wisdom enough to know that he is not the equal of the neighbouring squire or banker or doctor or attorney; that he is less free than his neighbour who gets twice his wages, and has to support half his number of children; that although perhaps "an honest man and a marvellous good bowler," he is not by nature or habit a model of virtue; and that it is not contempt of men's rights, but neglect of men's duties, which is the principal cause of misfortunes whether private or public. And in the majority of cases—the experiment may easily be tried—he will plainly characterize any one who goes about to deny these palpable verities, as a fool, strengthening the description probably by a favourite epithet, often, it must be owned, used without much nicety of discrimination, but here not infelicitous; for the Jacobin agitator is apt from sanguine to

Digitized by Google

become sanguinary, and is, at the least potentially, a man of blood. The rights of the Man and the Citizen are generalities without substance, which awake no enthusiasm in the ordinary British voter. For his own concrete rights he—Smith, Jones, Brown—is deeply concerned. He is well aware what they are; he knows how to guard them; and he is not ignorant that they depend upon exactly the same footing as the rights of his richer or poorer neighbours—"the security of law common to all." Such are the vast majority of the English people, and such they have been since England has been. Mr. Freeman has told us, in his graphic way, how it was that our liberties "broadened down" in medieval times; how, if our ancestors "saw any practical abuses in the land, the king could get no money out of them until he set matters right again;" how "if they saw a bad law, they demanded its alteration; if they saw a wicked minister, they demanded his dismissal." And he adds, "it is this sort of bit-by-bit reform, going on for six hundred years, which has saved us alike from magnificent theories and from massacres in the cause of humanity."[1] The influence of race, the impress given to national character by national history, are among the most ineradicable things in the world. A process of moral evisceration would be a necessary preliminary to our getting the principles of '89 into us. And the example of France is hardly an encouragement to

[1] *Historical Essays*, First Series, p. 45.

Digitized by Google

us to submit ourselves to so uninviting an operation; "to be drawn and trussed, in order that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags, and paltry blurred shreds of paper about the rights of man." [1]

[1] Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution.* Works, vol. iv. p. 221.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AGE OF BALZAC.

I SUPPOSE the time has at last arrived when the position of Honoré de Balzac in the literature of his country may be considered as permanently fixed. The dictum of the ancient sage, "call no man happy before his death," applies with peculiar force to the writers of books. Nothing is more untrustworthy than the estimate of an author formed by his contemporaries—even by the most clear-sighted and highly-gifted of them. Nothing more strikingly illustrates human fallibility than the gradual modifications often observable in such estimates, modifications not unfrequently amounting, in the long run, to a complete revolution of opinion. Take the late M. Sainte-Beuve for example: and he is a signal example of a man uniting in a high degree the endowments which are the requisite equipment of those who aspire—

> "to give and merit fame,
> And justly bear a critic's noble name.

Soundness of judgment, refinement of taste, power of

Digitized by Google

intellectual diagnosis, and delicacy of touch, were his in ample measure; in no less ample measure in 1834 than in 1852. And yet what a difference had come over his estimate of Balzac in those eighteen years! The earlier criticism[1] amounts to little more than this, that the great novelist is a clever charlatan. He describes him as a magnetizer, an alchemist of thought, the professor of an occult science, "equivocal, notwithstanding his proofs,"—and among the "proofs" then before the world, it should be remembered, were some of his greatest works, *Eugénie Grandet*, *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, *Le Médecin de Campagne*, *Le Colonel Chabert*, *Gobseck*,—"with a talent often startling and fascinating, not less often questionable and illusory." And, again, "In the invention of a subject, as in the details of his style, M. de Balzac's pen is facile, unequal, risky; he makes his start, proceeds for a while at an easy foot-pace, breaks out into a gay gallop, and lo! all at once down he comes: then picks himself up and jogs on again until his next tumble." And once more: "As a literary artist, M. de Balzac is wanting in purity and simplicity, in precision and definiteness. He retouches his outlines and overloads them: his vocabulary is incoherent and exuberant; his diction ebullient and fortuitous; his phraseology is physiological; he affects terms of science, and runs every risk of the most motley assortment of colours." Let us now turn to the criticism which appeared

[1] It appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of November, 1834, and is republished in *Portraits Contemporains*, vol. ii.

Digitized by Google

eighteen years later.[1] Here we find Balzac characterized as certainly the most inventive, and among the most fecund, in his walk of literature; his "rich and luxuriant nature," "his excellence in depicting character," "the manifold skill, the delicate and powerful seductions," which make his works a "rich and varied heritage," are fully acknowledged; and his style is pronounced to be "fine, subtle, flowing, picturesque, and boldly-original." Sainte-Beuve's later estimate was the sounder, and it is the more creditable to him to have formed and expressed it, because, not to speak of his personal reasons—and they were good reasons—for regarding Balzac unfavourably, the minds of the two men were cast in very different moulds, and their tastes formed upon quite other standards. But curiously enough the first clear recognition of Balzac's true rank in French literature proceeded from one even further removed from him than Sainte-Beuve was, in genius, character, and sympathies. It is not easy to exaggerate the loathing with which the horrible pictures of depravity, the nude expositions of vice in the *Comédie Humaine*, must have filled the pure soul of Lamartine, "most chaste, most divine of French poets," as he has been happily called. Yet he judged its author—and the judgment was received with a storm of indignation—to be superior to Molière

[1] In the *Constitutionnel* of the 2nd September, 1852. It is reprinted in the second volume of the *Causeries du Lundi*. It must not be supposed that this article is unqualified eulogy. M. Ste.-Beuve's recognition of merit, always discriminating, is something more than discriminating when there is question of Balzac.

Digitized by Google

in fecundity, although inferior in literary style. The storm has long passed away, but the judgment remains, and Time has set his seal to it. Balzac's place among the classics of France is securely established as the greatest master of romantic fiction his country has produced, and his supremacy is not merely French but European. It is not too much to affirm of him that he is, in his own domain, what Tacitus is among historians, Michael Angelo in the arts of design, and Dante among poets. Indeed, in the truest sense of the word, all three of these great masters are poets. For what is poetry but creation; its essence the power of producing or reproducing living beings, not merely as true as those of the world of experience, but a great deal truer? In the mere mechanism of diction, Balzac is, of course, as far as possible removed from Tacitus. Laboured expansion is the main note of the one, laboured conciseness of the other. But in realistic power, in the skill with which the movements of the mind and the passions are exhibited working under the veil of social phenomena, in the cold scientific exposition of the terrible truth of things, there exists as striking a resemblance

[1] I take it that the general estimate of Balzac's style is much higher now than was possible in Lamartine's time, when the old classical, and, if I may say so, somewhat pedantic tradition was still in full force. It would be impertinent for an Englishman to speak in any but the most diffident tone upon such a question. I will therefore merely refer to M. Taine's admirable pages on 'Le style de Balzac' in his *Nouveaux Essais* (pp. 98—116), where the conclusion arrived at is "Évidemment cet homme savait sa langue; même il la savait aussi bien que personne: seulement il l'employait à sa façon."

Digitized by Google

between the two writers, as there exists between the civilizations which they set themselves to paint. Nay, they have in common many of the same faults. There is in both the same crudity of colouring, the same obscurity of thought, the same redundance of ideas, the same lack of simplicity and ease. "Tacite creuse dans le mal," observes Fénelon. The same may be said of Balzac. Nor is the analogy between Balzac and Michael Angelo less real and striking. Both were anatomists of supreme excellence—the one of the body politic, the other of the corporal frame. And, in both, profound knowledge was united to and subserved a marvellous gift of idealization, whence resulted those colossal types, whose effect upon the mind is such as no servile copying of the living model, no direct imitation of the seen and actual, can ever produce. There can be no question of the excesses into which Michael Angelo's science led him—excesses patent to the most superficial critics and inimical to the popular appreciation of his greatness. Balzac's excesses are of exactly the same kind. To the parallel which exists between Balzac and Dante I shall have occasion to return hereafter. I here merely note that the gifts which enabled the novelist to body forth the terrestrial Inferno[1] of nineteenth-century France, closely resemble those which inspired the

[1] "Ce Paris, qualifié d'antichambre de l'enfer, ce qui est vrai pour bien des gens, même pour les écrivains qui le décrivent."—*Letter to the Abbé Églé: Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 403. My references are made to the *Édition Définitive*, Paris, 1869-76.

Digitized by Google

medieval bard to recount what he had seen among the nations of the dead. It has been happily observed by Lord Macaulay, "The great source of the power of the *Divine Comedy* is the strong belief with which the story seems to be told. . . . . When we read Dante, the poet vanishes—we are listening to the man who has returned from the 'valley of the dolorous abyss,' we seem to see the dilated eye of horror, to hear the shuddering accents with which he tells his fearful tale." "On a répété à outrance," M. Chasles remarks, "que M. de Balzac était un observateur, un analyste ; c'était mieux ou pis ; c'était un voyant." And so M. Sainte-Beuve :—

"Balzac was, so to speak, inebriated with his work. From his youth up, he lived in it and never left it. That world, half the result of observation, half of creation, in all senses of the word; those persons of all sorts and conditions whom he had endowed with life, were confounded for him with the world and the persons of real life. The men and women of the external world were but a pale copy of his own creations whom he used to see, to quote, to talk with, upon every occasion, as acquaintances of his own and yours. So powerfully and distinctly had he clothed them with flesh and blood, that once placed and set in action, he and they never left one another. They all encompassed him, and in moments of enthusiasm would circle about him, and drag him into that immense round of the *Comédie Humaine*, which, but to look at in passing, makes us dizzy, an effect that its author was the first to experience."[1]

---

[1] *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii. p. 451. His sister, Madame Surville, writes :—

"Il nous contait les nouvelles du monde de *La Comédie Humaine*, comme on raconte celles du monde véritable.

"Savez-vous qui Félix de Vandenesse épouse? Une demoiselle de Grandville. C'est un excellent mariage qu'il fait là : les Grand-

Digitized by Google

Dante, as we read, grew lean over his *Divine Comedy*. Balzac wrote his *Comédie Humaine* "not only with his thought, but with his blood and with his muscles,"[1] and died at fifty, his robust frame absolutely worn out by the prodigality of his intellectual toil.

Such then by general, I do not of course say universal, consent, would appear to be the position of Honoré de Balzac in the literature of France. The most inventive brain which his country has ever produced, he holds, in this respect, among French writers the place which Shakspeare holds among ourselves. Perhaps, indeed, it is not temerarious to assert that he is, upon the whole, the nearest approach to a

ville sont riches, malgré ce que mademoiselle de Bellefeuille a coûté à cette famille.

"Si quelquefois nous lui demandions grâce pour un jeune homme en train de se perdre ou pour une pauvre femme bien malheureuse dont le triste sort nous intéressait :

"Ne m'étourdissez pas avec vos sensibleries, la vérité avant tout ; ces gens là sont faibles, inhabiles, il arrive ce qui doit arriver, tant pis pour eux !

"Il chercha longtemps un parti pour Mademoiselle Camille de Grandlieu, et rejetait tous ceux que nous lui proposions.

"Ces gens ne sont pas de la même société, le hasard seul pourrait faire ce mariage, et nous ne devons user que fort sobrement du hasard dans nos livres : la réalité seule justifie l'invraisemblance ; on ne nous permet que le possible, à nous autres !"—*Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. xxxix.

[1] "Il n'écrit pas seulement avec sa pure pensée, mais avec son sang et ses muscles."—*Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii. p. 448.

Digitized by Google

Shakspeare, the best substitute for one, that the genius of his country allows. But the point of resemblance between him and Shakspeare with which I am more particularly concerned in this chapter, and which brings me to my proper subject, is not invention. Shakspeare is not merely the great poet of human nature in all time. He is also the most faithful exponent of English life in the sixteenth century. From this point of view, his works are documents of history of the highest value, and from this point of view only, for, as I need hardly observe, the plays called historical are, critically considered, mere *réchauffés* of babbling chronicles. It was the work of this supreme intellect, among so much else, to catch in his magic mirror the principal types of the civilization of his times, and by a divine gift to fix them in his pages, ineffaceable for ever. The men and women who in stately procession troop through the plays of Shakspeare are all of his own age, for he knew no other. Whether they masquerade in Homeric chlaina and peplos, in Roman toga and stola, in medieval mail and wimple, they all in truth belong to "the spacious times of great Elizabeth." Heine reckons it a piece of right good fortune that Shakspeare came just when he did, before the Puritans had "rooted up, flower by flower, the religion of the past;" while "the popular belief of the Middle Ages —Catholicism—destroyed in theory, yet existed in all its enchantment, in the spirit of humanity, and upheld itself in the manners, fashions, and intuitions

Digitized by Google

of men." His plays give us a picture of society, with its medieval order still subsisting, and illuminated by the last rays of the setting sun of chivalry. They are, in Heine's admirable phrase, "a proof that merry England once really existed," blooming with light and colour and joy, which have long passed away. The work of portraiture which Shakspeare did for sixteenth-century England accidentally and by the way, Honoré de Balzac set himself deliberately to do for nineteenth-century France, as it existed under the Empire, the Restoration, and the Monarchy of July. There is as great a difference between the spirit in which the two artists worked, as in the effect which they produce upon us. In one we have the unconscious power which is a token of the richest exuberance of health; in the other the restless striving and panting endeavour, which speak of a fevered brain and a diseased heart. In Shakspeare there is a pervading freshness, as of mountain air—a perfume, as of "sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses." In Balzac we breathe an atmosphere which may be likened to that "Egyptian gale" issuing from the Bath ball-room, whose pestilential vapours, so nearly fatal to Mr. Matthew Bramble, have received all too minute description and analysis from the learned pen of Tobias Smollett.

It would seem to be "evident to any formal capacity," that in judging of an author's works, the purpose which he avows in writing them ought not to be overlooked. The purpose assigned may not, indeed, be the true, the chief, or the sole purpose

Digitized by Google

intended, and most certainly will not have been the only purpose served. Our words once uttered, still more, once printed, are no longer ours. Books have an existence and a career of their own, quite independent of the writer's volition. Still, no criticism can be fair, or really scientific, which neglects the account an author himself gives of his end and aim. Thus, if we would judge rightly of the *Waverley Novels*, it is important to remember that their author, in dedicating them to George IV., intimates their function as being to "amuse hours of relaxation, or relieve those of languor, pain, and anxiety," and deems that "the success they are supposed to have achieved" in these respects "must have so far aided the warmest wish of his Majesty's heart, by contributing, in however small a degree, to the happiness of his people." Théophile Gautier, less modestly, in his preface to a book[1] where, indeed, modesty has no place, declares the use of a novel to be twofold —namely, to put certain thousands of francs into the pocket of the author, and to supply more amusing reading than is offered by the organs of utilitarianism, virtue, and progress in the journalistic press. No doubt Honoré de Balzac, a professed man of letters, felt the force of Dr. Johnson's dictum, "For we that live to please, must please to live." But he did not regard his pen as a mere instrument for making money; nor was it his aim to titillate the popular taste, or to pander to the prurient instincts of

[1] *Mademoiselle de Maupin.*

Digitized by Google

mankind. "One day," he writes, "people will know that no two centimes have found their way into my purse which have not been hardly and laboriously gained; that praise and blame have been quite indifferent to me; that I have constructed my work in the midst of cries of hate and discharges of literary musketry; and that I proceeded in it with a firm hand and an unswerving purpose."[1] When, indeed, Balzac said that praise or blame were quite indifferent to him, he must not be taken quite literally; no man ever more keenly hungered after fame; but it is absolutely true that he kept his purpose steadily before him, never suffering himself to be turned aside from it *arbitrio popularis auræ;* and that he was content to leave his literary reputation to Time, the great judge.[2] "Construire son œuvre" was his abiding

[1] *Letter to Madame Hanska: Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 381. Madame Surville tells us, "L'amour qu'il avait pour la perfection et son profond respect pour son talent et pour le public lui firent peut-être trop travailler ce style . . . . Ce n'était qu' après avoir corrigé successivement onze ou douze épreuves d'une même feuille qu'il donnait le *bon à tirer*, tant attendu par les pauvres typographes tellement fatigués de ces corrections, qu'ils ne pouvaient faire chacun qu'une page de suite de Balzac. Pendant qu'il demandait tant d'épreuves de la même feuille et que ses corrections diminuaient de beaucoup le prix de ces œuvres, on l'accusait de tirer à la page et de faire du mercantilisme!"—*Ibid.* p. lxix.

[2] His sister tells us that he would console her in the following terms when she was distressed by attacks made upon him: "Êtes-vous simples de vous attrister! les critiques peuvent-ils rendre mes œuvres bonnes ou mauvaises? laissons faire le temps, ce grand justicier; si ces gens se trompent, le public le verra un jour ou l'autre, et l'injustice profite alors à celui qu'elle a maltraité; d'ailleurs, ces *guerilleros* de l'art touchent juste quelquefois, et en corrigeant

Digitized by Google

thought, and, as I have said, that work was to paint the civilization of his age.

This was the great idea of his literary life. At first, as he tells us in the Introduction to his *Comédie Humaine*, the project floated before his mind like a dream, vague, unsubstantial, illusory—"a chimera smiling on him, just showing a glimpse of its woman's face, and then spreading its wings, and taking its flight back to its fantastic heaven." But in time the vision took shape, proportion, substance. To embody a great image of the age in which he lived, of its men, its women, and its things, that is, of its persons and the material representations in which their thoughts found expression, such was the dream which gradually developed into a project, and then was ever before him as a fixed idea. To make the inventory of vices and virtues, to bring together the chief phenomena of the passions, to choose the most salient facts of society, to paint character, to compose types by uniting homogeneous traits, and thus to write that side of the history of the times which professed historians so often overlook—this is the account that he gives of the task to which he set himself. Of the vastness of that task he was fully conscious. Of his power to execute it he never for a moment doubted. Human nature is infinitely varied. Chance is the greatest romancer in the world. "Pour être fécond il n'y a

les fautes qu'ils signalent, on rend l'œuvre meilleure; en fin de compte, je leur dois de la reconnaissance."—*Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. lx.

Digitized by Google

qu'à l'étudier." Irrefragable patience and invincible courage would, indeed, be required. But with their aid he should achieve a monumental work upon nineteenth-century France; such a work as the world in vain desiderates upon the civilizations of ancient Athens, Rome, Tyre, Memphis, Persia, India, "le tableau de la société moulée sur le vif, avec tout son bien et tout son mal."[1] This is the character in which Balzac presents himself in the introduction to his great work: not as a mere teller of stories, but as the historian of a civilization. And it is thus that I propose to consider him in this chapter.

The *Comédie Humaine* as we have it (for with Balzac's other writings I am not at present concerned), is incomplete. Out of the one hundred and fifty tales of which it was to have consisted, only eighty were written, when in the maturity of his powers and the fulness of his success, with the "fair guerdon," so long hoped for, just gained, the "blind Fury with the abhorréd shears" made her inexorable apparition, cutting short the "thin spun life" with the too vast enterprise which hung upon it. But the fragment of his gigantic design which remains to us is colossal, filling, as it does, in the *édition définitive* of his works, seventeen royal octavo volumes, each containing some six hundred and fifty closely-printed pages. His

[1] *Œuvres*, vol. i.: *Avant-Propos*, p. 7.

Digitized by Google

novels, as he ultimately arranged them, are grouped under six divisions, "Scenes," as he terms them, of life's poor play. First come the *Scènes de la Vie Privée;* then the *Scènes de la Vie de Province, Parisienne,* and *Politique;* and, lastly, the *Scènes de la Vie Militaire,* and *de la Vie de Campagne.* The classification appears to be to some extent arbitrary. It is difficult to see why a story like *Modeste Mignon* should not appear among the Scenes of Provincial Life, or a story like *Une Fille d'Ève* in the Scenes of Parisian Life, as well as in the Scenes of Private Life, to which these two tales are assigned by the author. Balzac insists, however, that the groups correspond to certain general ideas. His Scenes of Private Life, he tells us, represent infancy, youth, and their faults, as the Scenes of Provincial Life depict the age of passions, of calculation, of interest and ambition, while again the Scenes of Parisian Life offer a picture of the taste, the vices, and all the *choses effrenées* excited by the civilization peculiar to capitals, where the extremes of good and evil meet. Each of these divisions, he maintains, has its local colour; and local colour with Balzac means a great deal. Then, after painting social life thus under its three ordinary aspects, he passes on to the exceptional existences of political life; thence to Scenes of War, the most imperfect of all his divisions; and, lastly, to Scenes of Country Life, which he describes as being, in some sort, the evening of the "various day" through which he has travelled. Lastly, to serve as epilogue, he

Digitized by Google

gives us his *Études Philosophiques*, where he is by way of exhibiting the causes of all the effects, of painting the ravages of thought, sentiment by sentiment. These are the frames, or rather galleries, to use his own expression, in which he proposed to set the multitude of existences born of his creative brain —the two or three thousand salient figures of an epoch which are, as he says, the sum of the types which every generation presents. Each of his novels is complete in itself. But many of the principal actors come upon the stage again and again in the different stories. As in the real world, we see them in the several periods of human life, in the varied hues of circumstance, in the different relations and multiform aspects of social existence. This incessant reintroduction into his tales of the same characters, so severely censured by many of his earlier critics, was a necessary part of Balzac's plan. And it is a signal proof of his consummate genius that it was possible for him thus to give currency to the coinage of his brain. Not only are his characters so strongly cast that once seen they are never forgotten, but, by an illusion which might have seemed beyond the reach of art, the verisimilitude of his work is increased by their frequent reappearance. It is as natural to us to come constantly in his stories upon Rastignac and Canalis, Du Tillet and Nucingen, De Marsay and Montriveau, Madame de Beauséant and Madame d'Espard, the Duchesse de Langeais and the Duchesse de Carigliano, as it is to find the same princes,

Digitized by Google

courtiers, and magistrates, great ladies of the court, *présidentes* and *bourgeoises*, wits, warriors, and financiers, reappearing volume after volume in St. Simon's immense *Mémoires*.

The best introduction to the *Comédie Humaine* is *Le Père Goriot*, because in it we meet, in the earliest stages of their career, many of the principal personages who reappear in the subsequent scenes. It is also one of the best examples of the author's powers, and is, perhaps, the most widely known of his compositions. *Le Père Goriot!* Who that has read this terrible story, which holds among Balzac's novels the same place as *King Lear* among Shakspeare's plays, has not felt himself, from the first, in the grasp of the great enchanter? You "cannot choose but hear" as he unfolds to you a tale far more weird and horrible than that wherewith the Ancient Mariner held spell-bound the wedding-guest. It is worth while to translate the page with which he introduces it—

"Madame Vauquer, *née* de Conflans, is an old woman who for forty years has kept at Paris a *pension bourgeoise* in the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, between the Quartier Latin and the Faubourg Saint-Marcel. This boarding-house, known under the name of the Maison Vauquer, receives alike men and women, young and old, and never have slanderous tongues found occasion to attack the morals of this respectable establishment. It is true that for thirty years no young person was ever seen there; and, indeed, for a young man to bring himself to live there, his family must make him a very slender allowance. In 1819, however, at about which period this drama opens—a poor young girl happened to be residing there. Discredited as is the word "drama" by the perverted and tortuous way in which it has been lavished in these days of dolorous literature, I must needs make use of it here; not indeed that this

Digitized by Google

history is in the true sense dramatic; but perhaps when it is ended, some tears may have been shed over it, *intra muros et extra*. Will it be understood outside Paris? One may doubt it. The peculiarities of this scene, full of detail and local colour, can hardly be appreciated, save between the *buttes* of Montmartre and the heights of Montrouge, in that illustrious valley of plaster ever ready to fall, and gutters black with mud; that valley full of real sufferings, of joys often false, and ever in so terrible a whirl of excitement, that only something quite abnormal can produce a more than momentary sensation. Still, one meets there, from time to time, with sorrows to which the agglomeration of virtues and vices lends grandeur and solemnity. At the view of them egoism and self-interest pause and are touched with pity; but the impression thus produced is evanescent, like the savour of a delicious fruit quickly eaten. The car of civilization, like that of Juggernaut, although there are hearts less easily ground to powder than the rest, which for a moment retard it and clog its wheel, soon breaks them; and proceeds on its victorious course. Just so will you do: you whose white hand holds this book: you who plunge into the soft depths of your easy-chair, saying to yourself, 'This may amuse me, perhaps.' After having read the story of the secret misfortunes of Père Goriot, you will dine with an excellent appetite, attributing your insensibility to the author, taxing him with exaggeration: charging him with poetry. Ah! be assured this drama is no fiction, no romance. All is true: so true that each may recognize the elements of it in himself: in his own heart perhaps."

This is, as it were, the overture. The curtain draws up and discloses the Maison Vauquer, "situated in the lower part of the Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève, at the spot where the ground sinks towards the Rue d'Arbalète by so sudden and stiff a descent that horses rarely go up and down it." "This circumstance," the novelist continues, "is favourable to the silence which reigns in the streets perched between the dome of the Val-de-Grâce and the dome of the Panthéon, two edifices which change the state of the

Digitized by Google

atmosphere by the yellow tone they give it, casting everything into shade by the several tints thrown from their cupolas. The pavements are dry: there is neither water nor mud in the gutters: grass grows along the walls. Even the lightest-hearted passer-by becomes grave there. The noise of a carriage is an event: the houses are melancholy, the walls prison-like. A stray Parisian would see there only middle-class boarding-houses or institutions, abodes of poverty or *ennui*, of moribund age or joyous youth enforced to toil. No quarter of Paris is more horrible, nor, let us add, less known. The Rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève above all is like a frame of bronze, the only one congruous with this narrative, for which no colours are too sombre, no ideas too sad, to attune the mind, as when the light of day grows less and less, and the song of the guide dies away, what time the traveller descends to visit the catacombs. Apt comparison! Who shall decide which is the more horrible spectacle —withered hearts or empty skulls!"

The Maison Vauquer is the catacomb to which Balzac guides his readers in *Le Père Goriot:* and he proceeds to lavish upon it his usual wealth of description, until the ignoble boarding-house stands before our eyes in its squalid completeness as vividly as it stood before his. Stroke after stroke paints for us its exterior, and then he brings us to the glass door armed with the shrill alarm-bell. We peep through before we enter, and see the arcade painted in green on the wall, and the statue of Cupid with all the

Digitized by Google

varnish peeling off. Then we go in and make our way to the *salon*. We survey its well-worn horsehair chairs, its empty grate, and chimney-piece adorned with ancient artificial flowers and vulgar clock in bluish marble; its barred windows, and walls hung with paper representing scenes from Telemachus, with the classical personages coloured, and meanwhile our nostrils are saluted with that "odeur de pension," for which human speech has no one epithet: "elle sent le renfermé, le moisi, le rance; elle donne froid; elle est humide au nez; elle penètre les vêtements; elle a le goût d'un salle où l'on a dîné; elle pue le service, l'office, l'hospice." Still this room is elegant and perfumed, as a boudoir should be, compared with the *salle à manger*, where we are introduced to Madame Vauquer and her *pensionnaires*—Madame Vauquer with her cat, her face fresh as a first autumn frost, her nose like a parrot's beak, her wrinkled eyes, her fat dimpled hands, her expression varying from the grimace peculiar to ballet-dancers to the sour scowl of the usurer; her little tulle cap with a band of false hair all awry, her slippers down at heels; whose whole person explains the boarding-house, just as the boarding-house implies her person. Her *pensionnaires* are seven in number. Poor Victorine Taillefer, motherless, and disowned by her wealthy father, with her kind guardian, Madame Couture, who takes her to mass every Sunday and to confession every fortnight, so as, at all events, to make a good girl of her. M. Poiret, who seems to have been one of the

Digitized by Google

donkeys of our great social mill, some pivot upon which had turned public misfortunes or scandals; one of those men of whom, as we see them, we say, "And yet such people must be!" Mademoiselle Michonneau, with her chilling white aspect, her stunted, menacing form, her shrill, grasshopper-like voice: Vautrin, the man of forty, with dyed whiskers, large shoulders, ample chest, great muscular development and deep bass voice, whose features, streaked with premature wrinkles, are significant of a hardness out of keeping with his supple and engaging manners; always gay and obliging, but somehow inspiring every one with dread, his eye seeming to go to the bottom of all questions, all consciences, all feelings; knowing all about everything, ships, the sea, France, foreign parts, business, men, events, the laws, the hotels, the prisons; ever ready, if a lock happened to be out of order, to put it right with the remark, "Ça me connaît!" He is really an escaped convict in disguise, known at the galleys as "Trompe-la-Mort," and is one of the most powerful and terrible of Balzac's creations. Then we have Eugène de Rastignac, with his Southern face, his fair complexion, black hair and blue eyes, his manner and air speaking of gentle birth; the pure and sacred affections of his home life still strong in his heart, as yet uncorrupted. He is reading for the bar, and living meanwhile upon the twelve hundred francs a year which his family, as poor as noble, contrive with the greatest difficulty to send him. Then, lastly, there is Père Goriot, who

Digitized by Google

had come to the *pension* in 1813 with jewellery and plate and a well-furnished wardrobe; taking the best *apartement* in the house, and paying his hundred francs a month for it with the air of a man to whom a few *louis* more or less were matter of indifference; his hair daily powdered by the hairdresser of the neighbourhood, and indulging in the best snuff regardless of expense. He was *M. Goriot* in those days and a person of consideration. But gradually his jewellery and plate disappear; his fine raiment wears out, and is not replaced; he moves from the first floor to the second, and then after a time to a garret on the third. His hair is no longer powdered, and his snuff-box is no longer used. The light of prosperity dies away from his face; it grows sadder every day; it is the most desolate of all that are seen round that wretched table. His *pension* sinks to forty-five francs a month and his consideration sinks in proportion. He is now known familiarly as *Père Goriot*, and is regarded as an excellent subject for the wit of the other boarders—"un pauvre créature rebuteé, un souffre-douleur, sur qui pleuvaient les plaisanteries." Handsome women have been observed to visit him now and again, and he is generally supposed to have ruined himself by clandestine vices. These are the inmates of Madame Vauquer's *pension*, but there are certain *pensionnaires externes* who for the most part subscribe only to the dinner, which costs thirty francs a month. The most notable among them is Horace Bianchon, a student at the

Digitized by Google

hospital, and one day to be a great light of medical science. He is a special friend of Rastignac and a very favourite character of Balzac's.

It is the hour of *déjeûner* at the Pension Vauquer. The boarders are assembling in the fetid *salle à manger*, and young Rastignac comes in from his law class, full of a ball to which he had been on the previous night, at the house of a very great lady, Madame de Beauséant, to whom he is related. He had met there a lovely Countess, a perfectly divine creature, of whom he gives a glowing description, and —will they believe it?—he is quite sure he has seen her that very morning alone and on foot in the by no means fashionable neighbourhood of the Rue des Grès. "No doubt she was going to pay a visit to Gobseck the money-lender," Vautrin suggests; and then he adds, making a shrewd guess upon the strength of a bit of information he had surreptitiously picked up, "Your Countess is called Anastasie de Restaud, and lives in the Rue du Helder. Rummage in the hearts of the women of Paris and you will find the usurer there in the first place, the lover only in the second." Rastignac is astonished, and strange to say, Père Goriot looks uneasy. "Ah, yes," Vautrin further remarks, "yesterday at the top of the wheel at the Duchess's; to-day at the bottom of the ladder at the discounter's. *Voilà les Parisiennes.* If their husbands can't supply means for their *luxe effrenée*, they sell themselves; if they can't do that, they would disembowel their own mothers to find

Digitized by Google

wherewithal to make a show. *Connu, connu!*" In the course of the day Rastignac goes to call upon Madame de Restaud, whom he finds with her husband and M. Maxime de Trailles (for in this *ménage* there is a *mariage à trois*), and is well received, upon the strength of his relationship to Madame de Beauséant, until he happens to pronounce the name of Père Goriot, whom he had noticed leaving the house by the back stairs as he was entering it. The effect is like that which is fabled to have been produced by the Gorgon's head. Shortly afterwards Eugène de Rastignac takes his leave, very much astonished and very much out of conceit with himself, and pays a visit to his cousin, Madame de Beauséant, who is herself in trouble. For three years there has existed between her and the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto what Balzac calls "une de ces liaisons innocentes qui ont tant d'attraits pour les personnes ainsi liées qu'elles ne peuvent supporter personne en tiers," and now M. d'Ajuda-Pinto is about to be married. All Paris, except Madame de Beauséant, knows that the banns are to be published next day, and while Rastignac is there the Duchesse de Langeais calls and enlightens her dear Clara's ignorance in the true spirit of the candid friend. The young man listens to a page of biting epigrams hidden under the affectionate phrases of the two women, and receives the first lesson of his Parisian education. Then he tells them of his own misadventure at Madame de Restaud's, and learns from Madame de Beauséant that the lovely Countess

Digitized by Google

is Père Goriot's daughter. There is another daughter, Delphine, married to the Baron de Nucingen, a rich Alsacian financier; the father is passionately devoted to both, and both are ashamed of him, and have denied him.

"Deny their own father!" Eugène exclaims in horror.

"Yes," Madame de Beauséant explains; "their own father, and a good father too, who has given each of them five or six hundred thousand francs to make them happy and to marry them well, keeping for himself an income of some eight or ten thousand crowns, for he supposed that his daughters would always be his daughters, that he would have two homes, where he would be adored and taken care of. In two years his sons-in-law banished him from their society as though he were the lowest of wretches." And then the Duchess takes up the tale. This old vermicelli-maker—Foriot, Moriot, or whatever his name is—had been president of his section during the Revolution, and had laid the foundation of his fortune, after the manner of the patriots of that period, by selling flour at ten times its cost price. His one passion was love of his daughters, whom he adored, and for whom he made great marriages. Under the Empire his sons-in-law tolerated him. But when the Restoration came, how could "this old '93" be endured in the *salon* of the noble or the banker? The old man discerned that his daughters were ashamed of him, and he sacrificed himself for

Digitized by Google

them. He banished himself from their homes, and when he saw them content, he knew that he had done well. He had given them everything; for twenty years he had lavished his love upon them; in one day he had surrendered to them his fortune. The lemon well squeezed, they had thrown the rind into the streets. "We see it every day," the Duchess continues, "and in every relation of life," glancing at her friend. "Notre cœur est un trèsor; videz-le d'un coup, vous êtes ruinés." "It is an infamous world!" Madame de Beauséant exclaims. "Infamous! no," the Duchess replies. "It goes its own way, that is all. The world is a slough; let us try to remain above it."

The Duchess takes her leave, and Madame de Beauséant, who is in the humour for moralizing, discourses to Eugène upon Parisian society, its corruption, its vanity, and its pitilessness. The more coldly you calculate, the greater will be your success. You are either an executioner or a victim. . Such is, in substance, her parable. A little later M. Vautrin unfolds to the student his philosophy of life, which does not materially differ from that of the great ladies. He agrees that Paris is a slough, and a very curious slough, where those who get splashed in a carriage are respectable people (one thinks of Mr. Carlyle's "gigmen"), and those who get splashed on foot are rascals. "Have the misfortune to take some trifle off a hook, and you are set on high in the dock, as a curiosity. Steal a million, and you are pointed out in

Digitized by Google

salons as a virtue. And you pay thirty millions of francs a year to police and magistrates to keep up that morality. Charming!" That virtue and vice are mere names, is the cardinal point of the simple system of this sage of the galleys. "Do you know," he asks Rastignac, "how you make your way here in Paris? By the dazzle of genius, or the address of corruption. Mere honesty is of no use whatever." And he adds, parenthetically, "Je ne vous parle pas de ces pauvres ilotes qui partout font le besogne sans être jamais recompensés de leurs travaux, et que je nomme la confrérie des savates du bon Dieu. Certes, là est la vertu dans toute la fleur de sa bêtise: mais là est la misère. Je vois d'ici la grimace de ces braves gens si Dieu nous faisait la mauvaise plaisanterie de s'absenter au jugement dernier." The actions which lead to the hulks, he maintains, are of precisely the same nature as those which lead to the most sublime heights of political or military life. His last counsel is, "Don't be more tenacious of your opinions than of your word. When there is a demand for them—sell them. A man who boasts of never changing his opinions is like a man who should undertake always to go in a straight line—a simpleton who believes in infallibility. There are no such things as principles; there are only events: there are no such things as laws; there are only circumstances. A wise man embraces events and circumstances to shape them to his own ends. If there were such things as principles and fixed laws, would nations put them on and off as we change a

Digitized by Google

shirt? A man is not called upon to be wiser than a whole people. The man who has rendered the least service to France is a fetish, highly honoured because he has always seen things in red: the utmost he is good for is to put the Conservatoire among the machines, labelled La Fayette: while the Prince, whom every one throws a stone at, and who despises humanity enough to spit in its face (pour lui cracher au visage) as many oaths as it asks for, has prevented the partition of France at the Congress of Vienna: he has deserved crowns: people throw mud at him." Such are some of the pleadings of M. Vautrin; and the cynicism of the world, as he makes acquaintance with it, teaches the young man the same lesson which had revolted him when it came from the coarse lips of the disguised convict. The novelist traces with supreme skill, how by a sort of fatality the least events of Rastignac's life combined to urge him to the career "where, as on the field of battle, he must slay or be slain, deceive or be deceived; at the barrier of which he must lay down his conscience, his heart, put on a mask, use men pitilessly as pieces of the game, and, as at Lacedæmon, seize fortune unobserved to merit the crown." The contrast between the splendour of the great world into which he has found his way through his cousin Madame de Beauséant, and the squalor of the Maison Vauquer, overpowers him. His imagination inspires his heart with a thousand bad thoughts. He sees life as it is: law and morality impotent among the rich, and wealth

Digitized by Google

the "ultima ratio mundi." "Vautrin is right," he says to himself; "fortune is virtue." Vautrin indeed has taken rather a fancy to him, and is willing to serve him more effectually than by mere precept. Poor Victorine Taillefer's modest eyes have revealed to that terrible observer the tender interest with which the handsome young man has inspired her. Why should they not make a match of it? He charges himself with her fortune, a modest percentage on which Rastignac will hardly grudge him. And so, assuming the *rôle* of Providence, he arranges a duel in which Victorine's only brother is killed by a military bravo, whereupon she becomes the heiress to the millions of her father, who hastens to reconcile himself to her. Rastignac shrinks back with horror from the alliance so considerately planned, and just at that moment Vautrin is arrested as an escaped convict, through the agency of Mademoiselle Michonneau, and returns to the galleys for a season.

Meanwhile Rastignac has met in society Delphine, Baronne de Nucingen, Père Goriot's second daughter, a young and beautiful woman married to a great capitalist whom she loathes, not without good reason, and just deserted by De Marsay, the king of dandies and a leading politician in the *Comédie Humaine*. The intimacy between Delphine and Rastignac soon becomes of the closest kind, to the enthusiastic delight of Père Goriot, who likes Eugène, and wishes "Fifine" to be happy in her own way. Illimitable love for his daughters has swallowed up all sentiments of morality

Digitized by Google

and religion in the "old '93," or, rather, supplies their place, for he seems never to have had any, and he devotes almost all that remains of his pecuniary resources to furnish a suite of rooms for his daughter's lover! In the mean time Madame de Restaud has been ruined by Maxime de Trailles. An inveterate gambler, he has given bills for a hundred thousand francs, which he has been unable to meet, and to extricate him from the hands of his creditors Anastasie has sold the family diamonds to Gobseck. Naturally, her husband has discovered the transaction. At the same time, Delphine is at variance with the Baron de Nucingen about her fortune. These troubles of his daughters are the last drop of bitterness in the old man's cup, and he is struck down by serous apoplexy. There is to be a great ball next day at Madame de Beauséant's, to which, through Eugène's influence with his cousin, Delphine has been invited, to her unspeakable delight. Hitherto the Faubourg St. Germain has been closed to her, though her sister is received there, and she has been devoured by jealousy. "She would lick up all the mud between the Rue St. Lazare and the Rue de Grenelle to enter my drawing-room," Madame de Beauséant had said to Rastignac. "If you present her to me, you will be her Benjamin, she will adore you." Madame de Restaud is to appear at the ball, and in order to silence the tongues of the world, if possible, is to wear—for the last time—the famous diamonds which her husband has ransomed from Gobseck; but her *couturière*, who has got wind

Digitized by Google

of Anastasie's troubles, declines to send home a certain *robe lamée* until a thousand francs are paid for it. The Countess is in despair. She goes to her father, and the old man drags himself from his sick-bed and crawls off to Gobseck to raise the money. Rastignac comes in and finds him exhausted by the effort. "J'ai vendu pour six cents francs de couverts et de boucles," he explains, "puis j'ai engagé pour un an mon titre de rente viagère, contre quatre cents francs une fois payés, au papa Gobseck; bah, je mangerai du pain: ça me suffisait quand j'étais jeune, ça peut encore aller. Au moins elle aura une belle soirée, ma Nasie. Elle sera pimpante. J'ai le billet de mille francs là, sous mon chevet. Ça me réchauffe d'avoir là sous la tête ce qui va faire plaisir à la pauvre Nasie." The old man is evidently dying. Eugène leaves him to the care of Bianchon, and goes to Delphine, whom he finds "coiffée, chausée, n'ayant plus que sa robe de bal à mettre." She is astonished that he is not in evening dress. He is astonished that she thinks of going to the ball. But she will not listen to him, and sends him off in her carriage to make his toilette as soon as possible, and come back to take her to Madame de Beauséant's. He went off to dress, the narrative continues, making the saddest, the most discouraging reflections. The world seemed to him an ocean of mud, in which a man sank up to his neck if he once set foot in it. He had seen the three great expressions of Society: Obedience, Struggle, and Revolt; the Family, the

Digitized by Google

World, and Vautrin. And he dared not take his part. Obedience was tiresome: Revolt impossible: Struggle doubtful. The education which he is receiving is already bearing its fruits. Already his love is tinged with egotism. His tact enables him to see into Delphine's heart. He feels she is capable of going to the ball over her father's body. And he has neither the strength to reason with her, nor the courage to displease her, nor the virtue to quit her. As he drives to the Hôtel de Beauséant with this beautiful and elegant woman, he is silent and moody. Delphine asks him what ails him. He replies, "The death-rattle of your father is in my ears," and he recounts with the warm eloquence of youth "the ferocious action" to which Madame de Restaud's vanity had urged her, and the crisis which Père Goriot's last act of devotion had brought on. Delphine's tears fall; but she quickly dries them. "Je vais être laide, pensa-t-elle."

While his daughters are dancing, Père Goriot lies dying. I do not know anything in literature more full of horror than the account of that death. Bianchon watches by him through the night. The one thought in his wandering mind is his daughters. He calls them by their names. He says a thousand times, "Elles dansent! Elle a sa robe." "Il me faisait pleurer, le diable m'emporte!" Bianchon confesses to Rastignac, who comes in when the next day is well advanced, his mind full of the splendour of the *fête* of the previous night. He sits down at

Digitized by Google

the foot of the dying man's pallet in that squalid garret, and listens to his wandering talk. For Père Goriot to die, is never again to see his daughters. That for him is hell. But he has served an apprenticeship to it since their marriage! And then he goes back to the old days in the Rue de la Jusienne, when they were children — "quand elles ne raisonnaient pas." Ah, why could they not always remain little! He has given them all he had, and they leave him to die alone. Had he kept his money, they would be there: they and their husbands and their children—tears in their eyes, and kisses on his cheek. Money gives everything: even daughters. And then he recalls the early days of their married life, when there was always a place for him at their tables, and he was a welcome guest, and their husbands treated him with consideration, for he still had the air of a man who possessed something. Ah, how well he remembers the first time when a look of Anastasie's told him that he had uttered some *bêtise* which humiliated her. The pain of dying is as nothing to the pain which that look gave him. And Delphine, too! Even Delphine grew to be ashamed of him. Since the day that their eyes ceased to shine upon him, it has been all winter for him. Annoyance, humiliation, insult—he has swallowed all! "Venez, venez, mes chéries, venez encore me baiser, un dernier baiser, le viatique de votre père, qui priéra Dieu pour vous, qui lui dira que vous avez été de bonnes filles, qui plaidera pour

Digitized by Google

vous!" They come not. Anastasie is in the midst of a terrible dispute with her husband; Delphine has taken cold at the ball, and is afraid of a "fluxion de poitrine." Bianchon and Rastignac lift the old man up to adjust him in his miserable bed. His eyes no longer see; but their hot tears dropping on his face wake up a gleam of consciousness in him. He thinks they are his daughters. "Nasie, Fifine," he cries, and seizes convulsively the young men's hair. "Ah, mes anges!" he murmurs; and, with these words, he passes away. "Sentiment suprême que le plus horrible, le plus involontaire des mensonges exaltait une dernière fois!"

Père Goriot has a pauper's funeral. Bianchon buys his coffin at the hospital. It is purchased there at a cheaper rate. Eugène places on his breast a medallion which the old man always wore next his heart. It contains locks of his daughters' hair when they were children, innocent and pure, "et ne raisonnaient pas," as he said in his agony. A priest, a choir-boy, and a beadle attend to the devotional part of the interment, a service of twenty minutes —a psalm, the *Libera*, the *De Profundis*—"as much as could be had for seventy francs in times when religion is not rich enough to pray gratis." Two empty carriages, with due blazonings, represent the old man's sons-in-law, who have left the two young men to pay expenses. The day is falling. A damp, depressing twilight is setting in. Rastignac looks at the grave which the gravediggers are filling up, and

Digitized by Google

drops into it the last pure tear of youth. From the high ground of the cemetery he surveys Paris, where the evening lights are just beginning to shine. His eyes rest almost greedily between the column of the Place Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides, where lives the *beau monde* which he had wished to enter. He says grandiosely, "À nous deux maintenant!" And by way of opening his campaign against Society, he goes to dine with Madame de Nucingen.

Le Père Goriot is a good specimen of Balzac's best work. Nowhere is his observation keener, his colouring bolder, his diagnosis more divinatory. Nowhere do we find in more ample measure what Sainte-Beuve happily calls "cette efflorescence de la vie par laquelle il donne à tout le sentiment de la vie et fait frissonner la page même." And, as M. Taine justly observes, while each character is marked by the strongest individuality, and removed as far as possible from the general conceptions, the pure abstractions which metaphysical novelists muffle up with the names and conditions of men, who does not discern through the details which constitute personality and make up life, an abridgment of one great side of the history of the age—nay, of the perennial history of the human heart? The story leaves Rastignac at the threshold of his career. He plays a great part in the *Comédie Humaine*, and at last rises to be Minister and

Digitized by Google

Peer of France. There is a passage in the *Peau de Chagrin*, in which he unfolds for the benefit of a friend the lessons taught him by his experience. What fools call intrigue and moralists dissipation—well, he has found that it pays. Fit for everything and good for nothing, as lazy as a lobster, he attains all his ends. The world takes a man at his own valuation. Push yourself enough, and it makes room for you. Puff yourself enough, and it believes in you. Dissipation is a political system. Reckless extravagance (manger sa fortune) is a speculation, an investment of capital in funds, pleasures, protectors, acquaintances. The merchant risks a million, toils for twenty years, and ends, very likely, in bankruptcy without a shilling or a friend. The man of the world who knows its secret springs turns them to his own profit, and meanwhile—lives. Should he lose his money, he has friends, reputation, yes, and money too, to fall back on. Such is the real morality of the age as Rastignac has learnt it. Probity in men! The De Marsays and Nucingens, the De Trailles and Du Tillets, have taught him at what to rate it. Modesty in women! Delphine and Anastasie, nay, the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant being judges, is it not a virtue fastened on with pins? These are among the most notable types of Parisian society in Balzac's pages. The Duchess is the chief figure in a novel which bears her name. Madame de Beauséant is the wretched heroine of *La Femme Abandonnée*. Madame de Restaud, sadly changed since Eugène first saw her

Digitized by Google

in the brilliancy of her beauty and guilty happiness, plays the principal part in the exceedingly powerful tale called *Gobseck*, where we behold the usurer at his trade. De Marsay, Du Tillet, De Trailles, and Nucingen with his marvellous patois, are familiar figures in the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*, where a whole story, *La Maison Nucingen*, is devoted to an exposition of the devices by which the Alsatian capitalist preys upon society. But Balzac aspired to paint the life of the great capital in all its aspects.[1] The *demi-monde* is depicted by him no less fully and vividly than the *beau monde*. The Parisian courtesan, with her furious thirst for every species of swift gratification, her mania for destruction, her absolute blindness to the morrow, her concentration of her existence in the passing hour, lives for us in the person of Coralie, of Florine, of Esther. Not less vivid is his picture of the *bourgeoisie;* and it is to two characters drawn from this class, M. and Madame Marneffe, that we must go for the most terrible types of cynical corruption: they are peerless in their infamy.

> "Unutterable, abominable, and worse
> Than fables yet have feigned,"

the putrescent atmosphere in which they exist seems to hang about one's clothes and one's hair, nay to penetrate to one's bones. One's impulse after reading of them is (in Mr. Carlyle's phrase) to bathe oneself in running water, put on change of raiment, and be

[1] "J'aurai peint le grand monstre moderne sous toutes ses faces." —*Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 382.

Digitized by Google

unclean until the even. Balzac's picture of Parisian journalism is a fitting complement to his pictures of Parisian lust. In the one, as he says,[1] we have the corruption of the flesh; in the other the corruption of the intellect. "Obscene, disgusting, brutal, cut-throat," were the epithets applied by the late Mr. Dickens to the newspapers of the United States in 1843. Fifty dollars, as he judged, would at any time convert malicious misrepresentation into sickening praise. Balzac, writing of the French press in the same year, expresses himself in very similar terms. But the description which Étienne Lousteau, himself a journalist, gives of "la vie littéraire" to young Lucien de Rubempré, of whom we shall see more presently, is, on several accounts, worth quoting. Slightly abbreviated, it is as follows:

"'Outside the world of letters . . . . there is not one single person in existence who is acquainted with the horrible Odyssey by which is reached what we must call—according to the diverse kinds of talent—popularity, fashion, reputation, fame, celebrity, public favour, those different rungs of the ladder which lead to glory, and are never a substitute for it. This fame, object of such ardent desire, is almost always a prostitute, crowned. Yes; for the lowest departments of literature, she is like the poor girl who shivers at the corners of the streets; for the literature of the second class she is the kept mistress who comes from ill-famed purlieus of journalism, and to whom I serve as a useful friend; for the happy literature of success she is the courtesan, insolent and brilliant, who has her own luxuriously furnished apartment, pays taxes, is at home to fine gentlemen, treats and evil entreats them, has her liveries, her carriage, and can keep her thirsty creditors waiting. Ah! those to whom she is, as she was once to me, and now is to you, a white-robed

[1] See his letter to Madame Hanska: *Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 380.

Digitized by Google

angel, with many-coloured wings, a green palm in one hand, in the other a flaming sword, with something in her at once of the mythological abstraction which lives at the bottom of a well, and of the poor virtuous girl in the banishment of a suburb, whose only riches are gained in the clear light of virtue by the efforts of a noble courage, and who soars back to heaven with a spotless character—when she does not die stained, polluted, violated, and forgotten, with a pauper's funeral;—these men, with brain circled in bronze, and with hearts still warm under the snows of experience—they are rare in the place which you see at our feet,' said he, as he pointed to the great city, from which the smoke was rising at the decline of day. 'They are few and sparse among this fermenting mass, rare as true love in the world of passion, rare as honestly gained fortunes in the world of finance, rare as in journalism a man unstained. The experience of the first man who told me what I now tell you was thrown away, and mine will doubtless prove useless to you. Ever, year by year, does the same impulse drive hither from the provinces an equal, not to say increasing, number of beardless ambitions which, with proudly raised head and haughty courage, rush onwards to the assault of Success—that Princess Tourandocte, so to speak, of the Arabian Nights, whose Prince Calaf each of them intends to be. But not one of them guesses the riddle. All fall into the ditch of misfortune, into the mud of the newspaper, into the swamps of bookmaking. They pick up, wretched beggars, materials for biographical notices, made-up paragraphs, penny-a-lining news in the journals, or books ordered by logically-minded dealers in inked paper, who prefer a *bêtise* which can be had in a fortnight to a masterpiece which takes time before it is ready for sale. These caterpillars, crushed before they become butterflies, live on shame and infamy, equally ready to bite or to puff a rising talent, at the command of a Pasha of the *Constitutionnel*, the *Quotidienne*, or the *Débats*, at a signal given by publishers, at the request of a jealous comrade, nay, often even for a dinner. Those who surmount these obstacles forget their ignoble beginnings. I, who now talk to you, for six months wrote articles, into which I put the flower of my intellect, for a wretch who said they were his, and who, on the strength of these specimens, got a place as *rédacteur* of a *feuilleton:* he did not take me into partnership, he did not even give me five francs, and yet I am obliged to give him my hand and to press his.'

"'And why?' said Lucien, proudly.

Digitized by Google

"'I may want to put ten lines in his *feuilleton*,' coldly replied Lousteau. 'In a word, my dear fellow, it is not work that is the secret of making a fortune in literature, but turning to account the work of others. The newspaper proprietors are the contractors—we are masons. Accordingly the more pronounced a man's mediocrity, the more rapidly he gets on; he can swallow any amount of dirt, put up with anything, and flatter the little mean passions of literary sultans. . . . . I pity you. In you I see what I once was, and I am sure that in one or two years you will be what I am now. You will believe that there is some secret jealousy, some personal interest, at the bottom of these bitter counsels; it is not so; they are dictated by the despair of the damned, who can never more leave his hell. No one dares put into words what I wail forth to you with the agony of a man struck to the heart, and crying like another Job upon his dunghill, "Behold my sores."'

"'Whether I strive in this arena or elsewhere, strive I must,' said Lucien.

"'Know then,' continued Lousteau, 'this struggle will be one with no breathing space if you have talent, for your best chance would be in having none. The austerity of your conscience, now pure, will give way before those in whose hands you will see your success lie; who could give you life with a word, and who will not say that word; for, believe me, the successful writer is more insolent, more harsh to new-comers, than the most brutal publisher. Where the bookseller only sees a loss, the author dreads a rival; the former shows you to the door, the latter crushes you. To produce noble works, poor child, you will dip your pen deep into the tenderness, the vital sap, the energy of your heart, and you will spread it all out in passions, in sentiments, in phrases! Yes, you will write instead of acting, you will sing instead of fighting, you will love, you will hate, you will live in your books; but when you have kept all your riches for your style, your gold and your purple for your characters, while you walk the streets of Paris in rags, happy in having sent out into the world a being named Adolphe, Corinne, Clarisse, René, or Manon, invested with all the attributes of real existence[1]—when you have ruined your own life and your

[1] I do not profess to translate "en rivalisant avec l'état civil"—a phrase eminently characteristic of Balzac, and properly untranslatable: for what meaning would be conveyed by the words "in rivalry with the registration of the State?"

Digitized by Google

digestion in giving life to this creation, you will see it calumniated, betrayed, sold, banished into the lagoons of oblivion by the journalists,—buried by your best friends. Can you look forward to the day when your creation will start up out of sleep, awakened—by whom? when? how? There is a magnificent book, the *pianto* of unbelief, *Obermann*, which roams in solitude about the desert of the shops, and which the booksellers therefore call in irony a nightingale;[1] when will its Easter come? No one knows.' . . . .

"This rude outburst, uttered with the varying accents of the passions which it expressed, fell like an avalanche of snow into the heart of Lucien, and left there an icy cold. He remained standing, and silent for a moment. At last his heart, as though stimulated by the horrible poetry of difficulties, broke out. He grasped the hand of Lousteau, and cried: 'I shall triumph!'

"'Good,' said the journalist; 'another Christian who goes down into the arena to give himself to the beasts.'"

Let us not pass away from Paris without noting the better aspects of its life which the novelist has not ignored, but which, it must be owned, bring into stronger relief the dark portions of his picture: his sketch of true and tender conjugal love in Madame Jules; of commercial honesty in the shopkeeper César Birotteau; of inflexible integrity, both political and literary, in the republican D'Arthez; of high professional honour, and devotion to right and justice, in the notary Derville. Nor, again, let us forget that small band of religious persons in *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine*, whose self-sacrificing devotion, whose prayers and tears go up for a memorial to heaven from the midst of a society gangrened by corruptions parallel to those of the Cities of the Plain. It would

[1] *Rossignol* is a slang term used in trade to signify a piece of stale goods.

Digitized by Google

be hard to find a more gracious example of fervent piety and charity divine than is exhibited by Madame de la Chanterie, and those holy and humble men of heart, M. Alain, M. Nicholas, M. Joseph, the Abbé de Vèze, who pursue, under her direction, their work and labour of love in self-chosen obscurity. Their daily text-book is *The Imitation of Christ;* and they live in the spirit of its precept, "Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari." In their presence "the great Inquisitor of human nature" lays aside his functions. He is content to stand as it were with doffed hat and reverentially raise the curtain, to give us in these "Frères de la Consolation," a glimpse of a better world—even in Paris.

Balzac has pointed it out as "one of the great wounds of our modern society," that nineteenth-century France is divided into two great zones—Paris and the provinces; the provinces jealous of Paris; Paris taking no thought of the provinces, save to demand money of them.[1] The tale, called *Illusions Perdues*, may be regarded as the bridge which, in the *Comédie Humaine*, connects the two zones. Its hero, Lucien de Rubempré, is a young man of Angoulême, whose real name is Chardon. His father, who had once been a

[1] *La Muse du Département: Œuvres*, vol. vi. p. 401. He adds, truly enough: "Autrefois Paris était la première ville de province, la cour primait la ville; maintenant Paris est toute la cour, la province est toute la ville."

Digitized by Google

surgeon-major in the republican armies, had subsequently earned a living as a chemist, and had married the last survivor of the illustrious family of Rubempré, a girl of great beauty, whom he had miraculously saved from the scaffold in 1793. The chemist's premature death, upon the eve of a great discovery, had reduced his widow and two children to poverty. She makes her living as an *accoucheuse*. Her pretty daughter, Ève, gains fifteen sous a day by working for Madame Prieur, *blanchisseuse de fin*. All the money the two women can possibly save from their narrow earnings is devoted to Lucien, who inherits his father's talent and his mother's beauty, and is one of the most promising students in the College of Angoulême. He has formed there a close friendship with David Séchard, a noble type of "persistive constancy," of solid virtue, of inexhaustible tenderness, brought into strong relief by the sordid avarice of his father, the drunken old printer, who deceives and swindles his son, and nearly ruins his prospects in life. Both David and Lucien are in a true sense poets, but after a different kind. David's timid, melancholy, meditative nature finds its poetry in Ève, whose sweet blue eyes tell a true tale of candour, purity, and patience. His love is, as Balzac expresses it, *à l'allemande:* deep, long unspoken because of its very profundity, and importing a life's devotion. "*L'et nunc et semper et in secula seculorum* de la liturgie," the novelist finely observes, "est la devise de ces sublimes poëtes inconnus dont les œuvres consistent en de magnifiques épopées

Digitized by Google

enfantées et perdues entre deux cœurs." Lucien's nature, cast in another mould, aspires ardently to fame. His poems find vocal expression, and attract the notice of Madame de Bargeton, a somewhat mature Delilah of literary tastes, who leads society in the noble quarter of Angoulême. Lucien's vanity is naturally flattered by the attentions of this great lady, who is quite willing to act as his Muse. She predicts a brilliant future for him; and by way of starting him in it, gives a grand evening party, where he is to read his verses. He repairs to it full of hope. All the notabilities of Angoulême are there: the Bishop and his Vicar-General; Madame de Chandon, a rival queen of the provincial *beau monde*, and her husband, a "ci-devant jeune homme," "encore mince à quarante-cinq ans et dont la figure ressemblait à un crible;" M. de Saintot, President of the Society of Agriculture, a well of science—only empty—and his wife, a large, solemn, and extremely pious woman, but an unpleasant partner at cards, whose name of Élise is inappropriately diminished by her friends into Lili; M. de Barton, the amateur singer, and M. de Brébian, the amateur painter in sepia, with their wives, two ladies consumed by the desire to appear *Parisiennes*, whose toilettes offer an exposition of colour outrageously *bizarre;* M. le Comte de Senonches, a mighty hunter, and Madame de Senonches, with M. du Hautoy in attendance; the Baron de Rastignac—Eugène's father—and Madame la Baronne, with their two charming daughters; and others over whom I must not linger. The Prefect

Digitized by Google

and the General are the last to arrive and close this gallery of provincial celebrities, of whom Balzac gives life-like portraits. Angoulême society does not share Madame de Bargeton's enthusiasm for budding bards, and is more astonished than delighted at the introduction of the young *rôturier* into its august circle. The good Bishop, indeed, is an exception, and makes kind inquiries about the young man, which some of the more mischievous of the guests resolve to turn to their own purposes. M. de Rubempré, they tell the excellent Prelate, really displays a promising gift of poetry, and is much indebted to the help given him by his mother in his literary labour. The Bishop notes the fact with the benevolent intention of saying something agreeable to Lucien, and, should occasion offer, of making some pleasant reference to his mother. The plotters, of course, take care that occasion shall offer. Lucien repeats some of his verses. Monseigneur compliments the young man upon them. "We cannot too highly honour," he observes, "those noble spirits into which God casts one of his rays. Yes," he continues, "poetry is a sacred thing; but, alas! poetry is suffering. Think of the silent nights of which those lines you admire are the fruit! Reverence and love the poet, almost always unfortunate in this life, but no doubt to be placed by God among his prophets in another. This young man is a poet," and he lays his hand upon Lucien's head. "Do you not see the fatal sign imprinted on his fine forehead?" Lucien is full of gratitude for this episcopal recognition, and goes on

Digitized by Google

to speak, poet-like, of "the sublime travail to which we owe creations more authentic than those of actual existence," of the long gestation in the brain of the ideas which are to assume form and live among men. "Your *accouchement* must be laborious," cunningly observes M. du Hautoy, carrying on the figure. "Fortunately you have your excellent mother at hand to assist you," adds the Bishop, seeing his opportunity.

Thus does Lucien lose his first illusion. He walks away from Madame de Bargeton's heated *salon* with rage in his heart and the fires of his ambition burning only the more fiercely for his discomfiture; and, as he wends his way towards his miserable dwelling at the east end of Angoulême, he sees David and Ève walking together on the bank of the Charente in the tranquil felicity of their young love; enjoying, as only happy youth can enjoy, the fresh yet warm air of the summer night, the perfume of the flowers, the splendour of the heavens; the poetry of Nature responding to the poetry of their own hearts, and interpreting it for them. Balzac is a master of these transitions, the artistic value of which he knew well. By-and-by Lucien goes to Paris, the true home of genius, as every one agrees, and there such of his illusions as had remained soon disappear. He learns that "il y a des impôts sur tout: on y vend tout: on y fabrique tout:—même le succès." In time he meets Vautrin under a different aspect from that in which we saw the terrible figure of this "Cromwell of the galleys"

Digitized by Google

in the Maison Vauquer; and the strange eventful history of the two, extends through another tale of considerable length and full of pictures of quite appalling vice, terminating congruously with the young man's suicide. I gladly turn aside from the contemplation of Lucien de Rubempré's career, to note the marvellous completeness with which, in the earlier portion of the *Illusions Perdues*, the conditions of life in Angoulême in the first quarter of this century are brought before us. This wealth of description, a special note of Balzac's work, is displayed in the greatest perfection in his Provincial Scenes. What can be happier, for example, than his picture of the Maison Claës, in its sombre old-world dignity, or that of the Maison Rogron, in the colourless cold of its *bourgeois* vulgarity? or his account of Tours in *Ursule Mirouet* or of Old Brittany in *Béatrix?* It is not enough for him to show us merely the men and women who are his typical creations as they act and speak in the various circumstances and periods of their lives. Far more than this is necessary for us to know them as he would have us know them. He would that we should be perfectly acquainted with all the surroundings in which they exist; the towns, the streets, the houses, the very furniture and garments in which they live and move and have their being; the viands they eat, the wines they drink, the books they read. He knew well that the "hidden man of the heart" leaves his impress upon every detail of exterior existence. He knew, too, that the

Digitized by Google

accidents of life (as we speak) not only express us, but also to a great degree form us. Do they not go largely to make up life? They explain not only what a man is, but why he is what he is:—"For such as we are made of, such we be." Hence the minuteness, the breadth, the completeness of the descriptive detail which Balzac deemed essential to his purpose, and in which he is absolutely unique. He called himself "a doctor in social sciences." He was, as M. Taine well expresses it, "an archæologist, an upholsterer, a tailor, a *marchande à la toilette*, a broker, a physiologist, and a notary, all in one. The immensity of his erudition almost equalled the immensity of his subject." It must be owned that occasionally his descriptions become absolutely oppressive in their thoroughness. One is ready to sink as the most exact and elaborate account of, it may be, raiment or furniture, fills page after page. There is justice in Sainte-Beuve's complaint, "il décrit trop." But it is true, too, as that critic adds, "Lorsqu'il plaçait dans un roman ces masses d'objets qui, chez d'autres, eussent ressemblé à des inventaires, c'était avec couleur et vie; c'était avec amour. Les meubles qu'il décrit ont quelque chose d'animé; les tapisseries frémissent."

As the *Illusions Perdues* connect the two great zones into which Balzac finds French life divided, so in *Le Curé de Village* we pass from the provincial town to the country. The story opens at Limoges in the shop of a dealer in old iron, "un nommé Sauviat," who in the troublous times of the Revolu-

Digitized by Google

tion had amassed a fortune, the demolished *châteaux* and convents having thrown upon the market an abundance of the materials in which he trafficked. The two sentiments strongest in the old tinker and his wife are a sense of religion and love of their daughter. They have hazarded their lives for the Catholic faith in the evil days of the Terror; they give their lives every day to little Veronica. It is a pretty picture which Balzac draws of "La Petite Vierge," as the neighbours call her, reading night after night to her father and mother the *Lives of the Saints*, the *Lettres édifiantes*, and other books which the priest lends her, old Mère Sauviat knitting the while and calculating that she thus saves the price of the oil that burns in the lamp. Then comes the fatal day when *Paul et Virginie* first falls into the girl's hands, and awakens in her a whole world of ideas and emotions which lend a new sweetness and a new language to the flowers; which show her fresh beauties in the heavens; and unspeakable depths of mystery in the gorgeous sunsets, in the pure splendour of the dew-bathed mornings, as she gazes on them from the banks of the Vienne. One of the little islands in the river becomes in her fantasy the *île de France* of Bernardin de St. Pierre's tale—the scene of an idyll which her imagination weaves for herself. Alas! it is to play a very different part in her tragic story. Round the figure of this young girl Balzac groups the life of Limoges. There is the banker, Graslin, whom she marries; there are the Bishop

Digitized by Google

and his secretary, the Abbé Gabriel de Rastignac, Eugène's brother; Monseigneur's two Vicars-General, Dutheil and De Grancour; and excellent M. Grossetête and his wife, persons of consideration in the city. Then we have the miser Pinguet, upon whose mysterious murder the story hinges, and the Avocat-Géneral, the Vicomte de Granville, a conspicuous character in the *Comédie Humaine*, who devotes himself, with all the energy of a rising official, to the detection of the murderer. From Limoges the tale proceeds to the village of Montégnac, where we make acquaintance with the excellent parish priest, M. Bonnet. The Abbé Bonnet is an admirable study of what Balzac calls that "*mens divinior*, that apostolic tenderness which lifts the priest to a higher level than other men, and makes of him a divine being." Gabriel de Rastignac, whose curiosity is aroused by finding such a man in such a place, asks him why he embraced the ecclesiastical state? "Je n'ai pas vu d'état dans la prêtrise," he begins his reply: "je ne comprend pas qu'on devienne prêtre par des raisons autres que les indéfinissables puissances de la vocation;" and then follows an account, unfortunately too long to be quoted here, of how it was that he became a priest. And again, when the Bishop's young secretary, upon whom the shadow of a mitre already rests, puts the question, "And do you really like being here?" he answers, "Yes: if God will, I shall die Curé of Montégnac. I could wish that my example had been followed by distin-

Digitized by Google

guished men who supposed that they were doing better by becoming philanthropists. Modern philanthropy is the curse of society. The principles of the Catholic religion alone can cure the maladies from which the body politic is suffering. Instead of describing the disease and spreading its ravages by elegiac laments, each should have put his hand to the work by entering as a simple labourer into the Master's vineyard. My task is far from complete. It is not enough to moralize people whom I found in a frightful state of impious sentiments. I wish to die in the midst of a generation entirely convinced."

"A frightful state of impious sentiments." In *Les Paysans* Balzac applied himself to the full portraiture of that state. His object, as we read in the dedication, was to tell the startling truth (l'effrayante vérité) about this class, the anti-social element created by the Revolution which—"a Robespierre with one head and twenty millions of arms"—will, as he judges, one day swallow up the *bourgeoisie* as the *bourgeoisie* has swallowed up the *noblesse*. In it he asks the legislator, not of to-day but of to-morrow, to accompany him to the fields, and to study the permanent conspiracy of those whom we still call weak against those who think themselves strong; of the cultivator against the capitalist. "Instead of fawning upon kings, as in former ages," he observes, "writers now fawn upon the masses. Crime has been made poetical; tears are drivelled over assassins; the *prolétariat* is well-nigh deified." "In the midst of this

Digitized by Google

vertige démocratique," he asks, "is it not urgent to paint the peasant as he is? not the simple child of Nature presented in the idylls of those who have never contemplated him except through a Parisian opera-glass; not the virtuous and uncorrupted son of toil, fawned upon by demagogues who traffic in his passions and his blood;" but "cet infatigable sapeur, ce rongeur qui morcelle et divise le sol, le partage, et coupe un arpent de terre en cent morceaux, convié toujours à ce festin par une petite bourgeoisie qui fait de lui, tout à fois, son auxiliaire et sa proie." It was one of the author's last works. He was engaged upon it, he tells us, for eight years, during which he took it up and put it aside a hundred times. He judged it the most considerable of the volumes which he had resolved to write.

The plan of this story is simple enough. As is usually the case in Balzac's novels, there is hardly any plot in it. One of Napoleon's generals, the Comte de Montcornet, shortly after the Restoration, buys a magnificent estate in Burgundy, and goes to reside upon it, with his young wife. The story opens with an admirable account of this beautiful property, *Les Aigues* it is called, in the form of a letter to a friend in Paris from Émile Blondet, a journalist who frequently appears in the *Comédie Humaine*. He has gone to pay a visit to the Count and Countess just after they have entered upon the possession of their domain, and finds himself in a delightful spot where nature and art are united without the one spoiling

Digitized by Google

the other; where art seems natural and nature is artistic. He expatiates upon the charms of the *château*, which he feels must have been built by a woman or for a woman: "un homme n'a pas d'idées si coquettes." And then there is the park, with its dark overhanging woods full of beautiful walks by the running brooks. Nature with its stillness, its tranquil joys, its facile life, casts a spell upon him. "Oh voilà la vraie littérature," he exclaims; "il n'y a jamais de faute de style dans une priairie; le bonheur serait de tout oublier ici, même *les Débats*." Such is the place which the Comte de Montcornet has purchased, and where he goes to live with the full intention of discharging all a landlord's duties. The peasants, insatiable in their greed for land, are bent upon making his residence there impossible, in order that the estate may be broken up into small lots; and they attain their object by the most horrible brutality and the most monstrous chicane. In the background there is the vile figure of the usurer Rigou, an apostate Benedictine, married "in the year I. of the Republic" to a maid-servant of the Curé; he has for some years held the office of Mayor, and naturally poses as the champion of "the principles of '89," and the enemy of the Church. This *bourgeois* Heliogabalus exercises over his neighbourhood a more than feudal tyranny. The peasants, who are in his debt for money advanced to them to buy land beyond their means, are as serfs who unsuspectingly render to him veritable *corvées*. They are only too glad to cut and carry his wood, his

Digitized by Google

hay, his grain, if thereby they may obtain from him time for payment of interest; nay, they patiently submit to his exercise of a *droit du seigneur* in consideration of *retardements de poursuites.* His household is made up of his wife, the *bonne* Annette, and Jean the gardener, and the business of these three persons is to minister to his desires; the least movement of his bushy eyebrows plunges them into mortal disquietude. Annette, "vrai chef d'œuvre de beauté fine, ingénieuse, piquante," is a handmaid in the patriarchal sense; the tenth of a succession of M. Rigou's Hagars. The meat and poultry, wines and liqueurs, vegetables and fruit, which supply his table are of exquisite quality. He has carried to perfection the science of egotism, of sensual gratification in all its forms. He is a Lucullus without display; a voluptuous skinflint. The peasantry are his tools. Unseen, he pulls the strings and they carry out his designs. The Comte de Montcornet's steward is murdered; and the Count himself has the narrowest escape from the same fate. He gives up the unequal contest. *Les Aigues* are sold, and the greater part of the estate falls into Rigou's hands. The *château* is pulled down; the land parcelled out for *la petite culture.* Fourteen years afterwards Blondet travels by the place on his way to the *préfecture* to which he has been nominated, and finds it altered beyond recognition. The mysterious woods, the avenues of the park, have been cleared away; the country is like a tailor's paper patterns. The peasant has entered

Digitized by Google

as conqueror into possession; the property is divided into more than a thousand lots; the population has tripled and is lodged in lath and plaster dwellings which arise on all sides. "And this is progress!" exclaims Émile Blondet. In strong contrast to Rigou we have M. Benassis, the country doctor, who is the principal figure in another scene of country life, called after him *Le Médecin de Campagne.* Another and a better "Man of Ross," he is quoted by M. Alain in *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine*, as one of the true great men of the age. "He has left his name written on a *canton.* He has conducted a whole country from savagery to prosperity, from irreligion to Catholicism, from barbarism to civilization." The Frères de la Consolation set him before them as a standard and an encouragement, a monument and a lesson.

So much must suffice by way of glance into the *Comédie Humaine.* Inadequate as must needs be any such view of a work which is in itself an epitome, enough perhaps has been said to convey some faint conception, at all events of the outlines, of the picture which it presents. It is a sombre and terrible picture; what there is in it of goodness and truth, of religion and virtue, but serving to render more visible the surrounding darkness. Nor is it possible to mistake its general signification. It exhibits to us a society which has got rid of the ideas of man's free-will and

Digitized by Google

moral responsibility, and has decided, in reversal of St. Augustine's dictum, that life is "voluptatis tempus non sanitatis": a society which, putting aside religion as a fable too idle for investigation and purity as a disease,—"a new malady brought into the world by Christ,"—works out the logic of the passions to its monstrous conclusion; a society believing, indeed, in the gratification of the senses while it lasts, and regretting it when it is gone, but with no other beliefs or regrets, and dominated (in Shelley's phrase) by "that principle of self of which money is the visible emanation." The question with which I am specially concerned here is whether this is a true picture. Does the *Comédie Humaine* possess the character which Balzac claimed for it? May the student of man and of society turn to it for the living image of manners in France during the first half of the nineteenth century? Is it an authentic document of the most important department of the history of our times? or is it a mere "tale of sound and fury, signifying nothing?"

In weighing the testimony of a witness, two points mainly have to be considered: Is he competent and is he honest? Balzac's competency would hardly seem to be open to doubt. It is somewhere remarked by Lessing that the only historian really worthy of the name, is he who grapples with the history of his own times; and he refers to the word ἵστωρ in support of this view. Balzac lived in the midst of the society which he essayed to paint. He applied himself

Digitized by Google

diligently to the study of it under all its aspects. He set down nothing on hearsay. He spoke that he knew and testified that he had seen. Nor can there be any question as to his power of appreciating the phenomena which he discerned. His marvellous faculty of observation is indeed conceded on all hands. It may be said of him, in the fullest meaning of the words, that "he brought an eye for all he saw." He brought, too, imagination to idealize, and will to realize, what he saw. Then, as to his honesty: Is there reason for impugning it? Are there grounds for believing him to have distorted the facts which he professes to record? Certainly there is upon the face of his work no trace of passion or prejudice. His tone is everywhere calm and unperturbed. He leaves upon the mind the impression, not of a partisan but of a *savant*. He regards with equal eye a Rigou and a Benassis. He exhibits the same care and conscientiousness whether he is delineating with supreme delicacy of touch an embodiment of wifely devotion in Madame Claës, or painting with his great bold strokes in Valérie Marneffe the most repulsive type of feminine corruption which human literature contains. Even in his worst characters he sees anything that there is of good, and faithfully sets it down. The terrible Vautrin is a devoted friend. The hardly less terrible Gobseck has his own standard of probity, and acts up to it. Esther and Coralie are the very victims of passionate love; love steeped in animalism, it is true, but love still. Balzac was fond of suggesting

Digitized by Google

a parallel between himself and Napoleon; and in truth, with much else, there is this in common between them, that the novelist in the realms of imagination, like the great Emperor in the sphere of politics and war, looked upon mankind without either love or hate, pity or contempt, as mere pieces in the great game of life. In its sublimest heights or in its lowest depths, angelical in purity or bestial in concupiscence, human nature is to Balzac merely a subject, and, in another sense from that of Terence, he thinks nothing that appertains to it foreign from him. But he denies, with earnest indignation, as a calumny, the assertion that his characters are mere inventions. They are real men and women, he maintains, drawn from the life; such as one elbows every day in our decrepit civilization.[1] Not indeed that his work was a mere vulgar transcript from the world around him. He claimed for it a merit beyond that of the professed historian as being more truthful. "J'ai mieux fait que l'historien: je suis plus libre."[2] Balzac is a realist, if you will; but a realist in quite another sense from that in which the epithet applies to certain writers of the present day, who seek in his great name a sanction for their coarse studies from the shambles and latrines of human nature. There is as much difference between his work and—let us say—M. Zola's, as there is between a portrait by Holbein or

[1] See Madame Surville's *Notice Biographique* prefixed to his correspondence. *Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. lxv.

[2] *Avant-Propos*. *Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 10.

Digitized by Google

Titian and a cheap photograph. The one is a mere lifeless imitation; in the other, beneath the external lineaments, the hand of the artist has "divinely found" the man. Balzac is immeasurably removed from the naturalism of which I speak—a naturalism which is the very contrary of the natural, because even when materially true it is artistically false. "Art," as Balzac himself says, "is idealized creation." The ideal is the highest truth. Gozlan relates a conversation between him and the famous detective Vidocq, which it may be worth while to quote, because it brings out forcibly what I am here insisting upon.

Vidocq had observed, "You are in error, M. de Balzac, in relating stories of another world, when the real (la réalité) is there, before your eyes, close to your ears, under your hand."

"Ah, you believe in the real," Balzac replies. "You are charming. I should not have thought you so *naïf*. The real! Tell me something about it, for you have just returned from an expedition into that fine country. But come now, it is *we artists who create the real*."

"No, M. de Balzac."

"Yes, M. Vidocq. Now look at this fine Montreuil peach. That is *the real*. What *you* would call real grows wild in the woods, upon a wild stock. Well, it is absolutely worthless that wild peach of yours, small, sour, bitter, uneatable. Now look at the real peach, which I hold in my hand, as a hundred

Digitized by Google

years of cultivation have made it, with cuttings to right and left, transplantings into dry or light soil, and due graftings; this peach, as one eats it, perfuming the mouth and the heart, this exquisite peach is our creation, and it is the only real peach. Just so it is with me. I obtain the real in my novels, as Montreuil obtains it in peaches. 'Je suis jardinier en livres.'"[1]

The metaphor may be carried further. Balzac is not a gardener devoted to the production of any one species of fruit or flower. It is not only men, but man, that he seeks to present; not isolated types, but a society. His garden is a microcosm. He aspired to the name of historian, and he knew well that history is a science. It is a profound observation of Aristotle that "he who really wishes to be master of his especial craft, and to grasp it in its entirety, must work his own way up to the highest general conceptions, and, in so far as they admit of determinate knowledge, make himself master of them, since it is with general conceptions that science is concerned." Balzac, probably, had never heard of this canon of the Stagirite, but he had fully appropriated and laid to heart the truth which it contains. "Il a saisi la vérité," M. Taine remarks, "parcequ'il a saisi les ensembles; sa puissance systématique a donné à ses peintures l'unité avec la force; avec l'intérêt la fidélité." There can be no question that the object to which his vast and varied powers were unswervingly

[1] *Balzac Chez Lui*, p. 215.

Digitized by Google

applied, the object to which his life was given, was to make his *Comédie Humaine* what, according to Cicero, comedy ought to be: "imitationem vitæ: speculum consuetudinis; imaginem veritatis."

And if from Balzac we turn to his contemporaries, there is a consensus of the weightiest testimony that the *Comédie Humaine* does in truth possess this character. Out of a great cloud of witnesses, I select three who emphatically corroborate its account of the moral and spiritual characteristics of the age. It is a saying attributed—I know not with what truth—to Horace Walpole, that life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel. Balzac belonged to the first of these classes. Alfred de Musset, Henri Heine, and Félix de Lamennais to the second. In their different ways these three men felt their age down to the bottom of their souls. It is the very Voice of Humanity which breathes through Alfred de Musset:—

"C'est cette voix du cœur qui seule au cœur arrive."

And there are few sadder tales than that which the Voice tells in the opening pages of *La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*: a tale of youth passed among the "fragments of a broken world," of a spring-time of life with all the desolateness of autumn, human illusions lying around like fallen leaves, the sunbeams no foretaste and pledge of summer's passionate warmth, but mere chilly harbingers of winter, as they struggle through the silent woods: "bare, ruined choirs, where

Digitized by Google

late the sweet birds sang." "It was," we read, "as if the lie were given to all things in heaven and earth; call it disenchantment, or call it, if you will, the annihilation of hope. It was as if humanity, in death-like trance, were adjudged dead by those who felt its pulse. As the warrior, of whom it had been asked 'In what do you believe?' promptly answered, 'In myself,' so the youth of France, when that question fell upon their ear, were prompt to answer 'In nothing.' There were as ever, indeed, the two voices: the sob of the soul; the laugh of the body." But let the poet himself interpret them.

This is what the soul said:

"Alas, alas! religion is departing: the clouds of heaven are falling in rain. We have left neither hope nor expectation: nor even two little bits of black wood crossed, to which to stretch out our hands in prayer. The star of the future can hardly rise: it cannot get above the horizon: it remains shrouded in clouds, and like the winter sun its disc is seen blood red—the blood which was shed in '93. Love is no more: glory is no more. What a thick night is over all the earth! And when it is day—we shall be dead."

This is what the body said:

"Man is here below to make his senses minister to him. He possesses more or fewer bits of yellow or white metal, upon which depend his right to more or less consideration. To live is to eat, drink, and sleep. As to the ties among men, friendship consists in lending money: but it is seldom one has a friend whom one can love enough for that: relationship is good if your relations leave you anything: love is a physical function: the only intellectual delight is vanity."

"The principle of death," he tells us, "descended coldly and without violent shock from the region of the intellect to the very depths of our being. We had

Digitized by Google

not even enthusiasm for evil. We had but the abnegation of good, and insensibility in the place of despair. So that the rich said to themselves, There is nothing true but riches: all the rest is a dream: let us enjoy ourselves and die. Those of slender fortune said to themselves, There is nothing true but forgetfulness: all the rest is a dream: let us forget and die. And the poor said to themselves, There is nothing true but misery: all the rest is a dream: let us blaspheme and die."

I pass from Alfred de Musset to another poet, of a very different order, indeed, yet as truly as he a child of the century, the most keenly attempered genius, the most bitter mocker, of his age, whose sardonic smile often serves as a veil for "thoughts that do lie too deep for tears." Henri Heine, writing from Paris in 1832 to his friend Lewald, notes as the basis of everything in France "a profound scepticism, not only regarding all public men from Louis Philippe to Auguste, chief of the *claqueurs*, from Talleyrand to Vidocq, from Guizot to Paul de Kock, but as to all that exists." And he goes on to say, "But in truth people can't be said to doubt, for doubt presupposes a belief.[1] There are no Atheists here. They have not preserved enough respect for *le bon Dieu* to be at the pains of denying Him. The old religion is dead down to the roots; more, it has fallen into dissolution. The *majorité des Français* will not endure further talk

[1] I do not know whether Heine had Pascal's phrase in his mind: "Douter de Dieu, c'est y croire."

Digitized by Google

of this lifeless corpse, and apply a handkerchief to the nose when there is question of the Church. The old morality is no less dead; or rather, it has become a mere spectre, which, however, in no case appears at night."[1] And he elsewhere writes, "Marriage, or rather adultery, is the *point de départ* of those comic rockets which shoot up so gloriously but leave behind them melancholy shades, if not a repulsive odour." "Morality, which is nothing but religion grafted into the character and habits of a people, has thus lost all its vital roots, and now, sickly and withered, holds by the dry poles of reason, which have been planted, instead of religion, to support it. But this poor and pitiful morality, without religious roots, and resting only on reason, obtains no decent measure of respect here. Society pays homage only to *les convenances*, which are merely the appearance of morality; the care to avoid all that can produce a public scandal."[2] And in another of his letters to Lewald, he observes: "In the French family, as in other relations of life, all ties are broken, all authority is destroyed. It is easy to understand that respect for parents is ruined in children when one thinks of the corrosive force of the criticism which has issued from the materialistic philosophy. This want of *pietas* comes out more strikingly still in the relations between men and women, in those unions, legitimate or illegitimate,

[1] *De la France*, p. 210. I quote from the French edition, which I happen to have before me.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

Digitized by Google

which assume here a character that renders them singularly suitable for comedy." "When a German heart beats in one's breast, one can take but little pleasure in the best French plays. . . . . The laugh is strangled in my throat, and if I did not fear to look like a fool before the most civilized people in the world, I should not be able to restrain my tears." [1] The political situation, he finds, bears a striking analogy to the moral. "France is the country of materialism," he writes; "materialism which shows itself in all the facts of public and private life." [2] "The liberty of the Press is employed to bring down by *persiflage* or detraction all greatness, and to dry up all enthusiasm for persons. . . . . This paring away of all greatness, this thorough annihilation of the heroic, is, above all, the work of the *bourgeoisie*, which has arrived at power in France through the fall of the aristocracy of birth, and which has made its narrow, cold, shop-keeping ideas triumphant in all walks of life." "I have certainly," he adds, "no mind to regret the old *régime* of aristocratic privilege, for that was but putrefaction painted, a rouged and perfumed corpse, and the only thing left to do with it was to let it peaceably down into its tomb, or to throw it there by main force in case it should wish to prolong its lying existence, and to rise in rebellion against its own burial. But the new *régime* which has taken its place is more disgusting still: and far more insupportable should we find that grossness

[1] *De la France*, p. 254. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Digitized by Google

without polish, that life void of perfume, that *industrieuse chevalerie d'argent.*"[1]

The last authority to whom I shall turn was far removed by character and temperament from Heine or Alfred de Musset. Among the confused mass of strange figures that cross the stage of public affairs in France during the first half of this century, there is one who, while in some respects essentially a man of the day, in others seems to have been born out of due time. Félix de Lamennais suffered intensely from "the malady of the age." But his voice is as the voice of a Hebrew seer to whom the Word of the Lord has come. He is the Savonarola of the nineteenth century: greater than the Apostle of Florence in his intellectual gifts, less in his spiritual, and incalculably more unhappy; for to him the issue was not martyrdom but apostasy. A worse than fiery trial was to try him, and it found him wanting. A son of the morning, the precursor, as many trusted, of "an ampler day," he fell from his high estate, cut off by the pride of his heart from the goodly fellowship of the prophets, of whose high and puissant lineage he came, from the noble army of martyrs, among whom he might have merited his crown. The light that was in him became darkness, and how great was that darkness! But his work remains. Not one of his true words has fallen to the ground. And this is his testimony to the character of his age, in the Introduction to his great philosophic treatise. He

[1] *De la France*, p. 276.

Digitized by Google

cites the prescient utterance of Bossuet, "Je prévois que les libertins et les esprits forts, pourront être décrédits, non par aucune horreur de leurs sentiments, mais parcequ'on tiendra tout dans l'indifférence, excepté les plaisirs et les affaires," and then he appeals, "You have heard him; now look around and answer. What do you perceive on all hands, but a profound indifference to duties and beliefs, an unbridled love of pleasure and of gold, by means of which there is nothing that may not be had. Everything is bought, because everything is sold. Religion, opinions, dignities, power, consideration, even respect. Vast shipwreck of all truth and of all virtues! The absolute extinction of the moral sense prevents men from taking interest even in speculative error, they leave it alone for what it is worth, just as they do truth. They take no thought of it, nor regard it as a matter concerning them." And once more: "This indifference is not doubt, for doubt presupposes a suspension of the judgment between opposing probabilities, presupposes a preliminary examination. It is a systematic ignorance: a voluntary sleep of the soul: a complete numbness of the moral faculties."[1]

Thus much in corroboration of Balzac's testimony as to the moral and spiritual characteristics of his age. It might be almost indefinitely extended; but

[1] *Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religion. Introduction.*

Digitized by Google

enough has been said, I think, to justify the conclusion that he is the witness of truth—that in his *Comédie Humaine* we have, as George Sand sorrowfully confesses, "la dure et triste realité des hommes et des choses contemporaines." But Balzac's conception of his work included more than the delineation of the social and moral phenomena of his age: more, too, than the exhibition of the ideas and passions expressed in those phenomena. Théophile Gautier has called him "the Dante of the *Comédie Humaine*"; and so he is, in the fullest sense of the phrase. The great Florentine poet is for us not only the exponent of the theology, philosophy, morality, politics, of the men of his generation, initiating us into the heart of their mystery, and unravelling for us the riddle of their lives; he is also their judge, giving sentence upon persons and events according to his reading of the eternal and unchanging law which ever rules in human affairs, and which carries with it its own penal sanctions. So Balzac aspired to do more than paint the types and conditions of nineteenth-century civilization, and to seize the meaning hidden in the immense assemblage of figures, of passions, of events. "Enfin," he writes, "après avoir cherché, je ne dis pas trouvé, cette raison, ce moteur social, ne fallait-il pas méditer sur les principes naturels et voir en quoi les sociétés s'écartent ou se rapprochent de la règle éternelle du vrai, du beau?"[1] A task of might truly, but the fitting complement of his

[1] *Avant-Propos: Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 6.

Digitized by Google

design. Let us briefly see after what manner he has executed it.

And here let me note, in passing, a strange misapprehension into which many of his critics have fallen; among them, one of the most considerable, M. Taine. Balzac, this distinguished writer says, finds passions and interests the motive principles of the world. He finds society a conflict of self-seeking, where force, guided by craft, is triumphant; where passion pierces silently and violently the dykes opposed to it; where the received morality consists in the apparent respect for conventionalities and the law.[1] This is undoubtedly true; but it is not the whole truth. Balzac does not recognize this as the normal condition of human society; on the contrary, he regards it as an abnormal condition. He holds the world to be "out of joint"; sick of a malady which he defines as egoism; and his *Comédie Humaine* may be truly described as a vast disquisition upon the pathology of this malady, an exhibition of it, as he observes, "in its thousand forms." He finds it at the very root of the public order of France, and accounts it the enduring cause of his country's disasters. "*Le moi humain*," he says, "is the only thing the Revolution has left us." It is a favourite doctrine with him that every animal has its dominant instinct, and that the dominant instinct of man is the spirit of the family.[2] Every country, he holds,

[1] *Nouveaux Essais*, p. 155.

[2] *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées: Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 175.

Digitized by Google

which does not take as its base the *patria potestas* is without assured existence. And in France, he judges, the family is extinct; the Revolution dealt it a fatal blow. "En coupant la tête à Louis XVI. la Révolution a coupé la tête à tous les pères de famille. Il n'y a plus de famille aujourd'hui; il n'y a plus que des individus. En proclamant l'égalité des droits à la succession paternelle, ils ont tué l'esprit de famille: ils ont créé le fisc." And he adds that the question lies between two systems: "Ou constituer l'État par la famille ou le constituer par l'intérêt personnel; la démocratie ou l'aristocratie; la discussion ou l'obéissance; le Catholicisme ou l'indifférence religieuse: voilà la question en peu de mots."[1] It is into the mouth of the Duc de Chaulieu, a Minister of State whom he gives to Louis XVIII., that Balzac puts these words; but there can be no doubt that they represent the novelist's own opinions. They are, of course, in direct opposition to those much-vaunted "principles of '89," which, as expressed in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, rest upon the proposition that "men are born and remain free, and equal in rights." As a matter of fact, Balzac finds that men are not born in the freedom and equality of rights of a wholly visionary state of nature; but in the dependence and inequality which are main notes of civil society in all its forms, from the most simple to the most complex. And, as a matter of theory, he holds that not dull and impossible uniformity, but

[1] *Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées: Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 175.

Digitized by Google

well-ordered gradation is the true conception of the political edifice. For him, in the words which Shakspeare puts into the mouth of the wisest of the Greeks, it is "degree," which is "the ladder of all high designs."

> "Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark! what discord follows: each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
> And make a sop of all this solid globe.
> Force should be right, or rather right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> This chaos when degree is suffocate
> Follows the choking."

But Balzac was no prophet of the past; he was not of those who "mistook remembrances for hopes"; who supposed that the tide of human affairs could be rolled back; that the régime of the eighteenth century could be revived in the nineteenth. Whether, indeed, he had any but the most superficial acquaintance with the course of French history during the two hundred years which preceded the great Revolution, I think very doubtful. I find in his pages no adequate appreciation of the Cæsarism which, from the destruction of the Catholic League at Ivry, pursued its monstrous course, crushing out one after another the old liberties of France, reducing her nobles from the monarch's peers to his titled lacqueys, and the spiritualty from an independent order—dear to the people for a thousand years as the champion of their rights—to an odious instrument of civil tyranny; in a word, over-weighting with absolutism the social

Digitized by Google

fabric, while the new philosophy was undermining its very foundations. Like Napoleon, Balzac would seem to have had little true knowledge of the past, but a supreme eye for the present. He discerned clearly enough that one of the most hopeless elements in the political situation of his country was the absolute incapacity of the old *noblesse*, who, from 1815 to 1830, fully vindicated the great Emperor's judgment of them, that they were capable of committing any *bêtise*. On the other hand, he had the smallest respect for the parody of English party government —itself the accident of an accident—which it was attempted to establish in France. He had an entire disbelief in the efficacy of constitutional nostrums in a country destitute of the most rudimentary conceptions of civil and religious liberty; a country where, as Lamennais learnt by bitter experience, "personne presque ne comprend, personne ne veut réellement la liberté; tous aspirent à la tyrannie et le disent hautement et en sont fiers." He had read the lesson, written in characters of blood and fire still freshly legible in his youth, that the pseudo-Liberalism of "the principles of '89" issues in the most odious despotism. But he knew well, that the "Revolution is implanted in the soil,[1] written in the laws, living in the popular

[1] "Vous avez mis le doigt sur la grande plaie de la France," dit le juge de paix. "La cause du mal gît dans le titre *des Successions* du Code civil, qui ordonne le partage égal des biens. Là est le plon dont le jeu perpétuel émiette le territoire, individualise les fortunes en leur ôtant une stabilité nécessaire, et qui décomposant

Digitized by Google

mind of France." Still its virus, as he judged, would, with more or fewer paroxysms, wear itself out. Sooner or later, he held, the public order must be reconstituted. "L'avenir, c'est l'homme social." "The great man who will save us from the shipwreck to which we are hastening"—it is M. Benassis, the *Médecin de campagne*, who is the speaker—"will no doubt avail himself of individualism to remake the nation; but, pending that regeneration, we are in the age of material interests and Positivism. Woe to the country so constituted!" These were Balzac's political views, and the course of events since his death in 1850 has gone far to justify them.[1]

sans recomposer jamais, finira par tuer la France. La Révolution française a emis un virus destructif auquel les journées de juillet viennent de communiquer une activité nouvelle. Ce principe morbifique est l'accession du paysan à la propriété."—*Le Curé de Village: Œuvres*, xiv. p. 177. And in another page he writes: "L'Angleterre doit son existence à la loi quasi féodale qui attribue les terres et l'habitation de la famille aux ainés. Avec le morcellement de la propriété l'Angleterre n'existerait déjà plus. La haute propriété, les lords, y gouvernent le mécanisme social. Au lieu de faire la guerre aux capacités, de les annuller, de les méconnaître, l'aristocratie anglaise les cherche, les recompense, et se les assimile constamment."—*Ibid.*, p. 182.

[1] The following words might pass for a prophecy: "Nous fabriquons des propriétaires mendiants chez le peuple, des demi-savants chez les petits bourgeois, et *Chacun chez soi, chacun pour soi*, qui avait fait son effet dans les classes élevées en juillet de cette année (1830), aura bientôt gangrené les classes moyennes. Un prolétariat déshabitué de sentiments, sans autre dieu que l'envie, sans autre fanatisme que le désespoir de la faim, sans foi ni croyance, s'avancera et mettera le pied sur le cœur du pays. L'étranger, grandi sous la loi monarchique, nous trouvera sans roi avec la royauté, sans lois avec la légalité, sans propriétaires avec la propriété, sans gouvernment avec l'élection, sans force avec le libre arbitre, sans bonheur avec l'égalité."—*Le Curé de Village: Œuvres*, xiv. p. 180.

Digitized by Google

Is there any more dreary page in the world's annals than that whereon is written the history of France during those years? I do not speak merely of loss of blood and treasure, of shameful humiliations and disastrous spoliations, but of far more deadly evils; of the complete dissolution of the bonds of thought, of that extinction of public spirit, which is the moral death of a nation, of the ostracism of the best from the government, while hungry demagogues, skilfully trading upon popular passions, rise from communistic *cabarets* to the seats of princes. Nor can the future be doubtful. The *bourgeoisie* has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Its kingdom is numbered and finished, and shall be taken from it by the *prolétariat.*

Balzac, then, was a Monarchist.[1] He also professed himself a Catholic. "I write," he tells us in his Introduction, "in the light of two eternal truths, —Religion and Monarchy: the two needs of France, which contemporary events proclaim, and towards which every writer of sound sense ought to try to bring back our country." Christianity he holds to be "a complete system of repression of the depraved tendencies of man, and the greatest element of social order;"[2] and of Christianity he finds Catholicism

[1] "J'appartiens au petit nombre de ceux qui veulent resister, à ce qu'on nomme le peuple, dans son intérêt bien compris. Il ne s'agit plus ni de droits féodaux, comme on le dit aux niais, ni de gentilhommerie; il s'agit de l'État, il s'agit de la vie de la France." —*Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées: Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 175.

[2] *Avant-Propos: Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 7.

Digitized by Google

the only expression worth considering: for he agrees with Comte,[1] that Protestantism in all its forms is merely Rationalism in different stages of development, its logical issue being Deism, and, in its most extreme phase, systematic Atheism. The doctrine of a life beyond the grave he regards not merely as a supreme consolation, but also as an incomparable instrument of government. In religion he discerns the sole power which sanctions social laws.[2] Hence it is that he accounts as the worst foes of his country the doctrinaires who, for the last century, have laboured with the violence of energumens to banish God from the public order, and who have made it the first principle of their system to withdraw the people from the influence of the Church. "Toute association," he writes, "ne peut-elle vivre que par le sentiment religieux, le seul qui dompte les rébellions de l'esprit, les calculs de l'ambition, et les avidités de tout genre."[3] "Every moral reformation not supported by a great religious sentiment, and pursued within the fold of the Church, rests upon a foundation of sand. All the religious observances, so minute and so little understood, which Catholicism ordains, are so many dykes necessary to hold back the tempests of evil within."[4] Hence, "teaching, or rather education by religious bodies,

[1] See a well-known passage of the *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, quoted at page 130 of this volume.

[2] *Le Médecin de Campagne: Œuvres*, vol. xiv. p. 491.

[3] *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine: Œuvres*, vol. xii. p. 679.

[4] *La Muse du Département: Œuvres*, vol. vi. p. 542.

Digitized by Google

is the great principle of national existence; the sole means of diminishing the sum of evil, and of increasing the sum of good in any society. Thought—le principe des maux et des biens—can be prepared, subdued, directed only by religion."[1]

It would, however, be a great error to suppose that Balzac sees in religion merely an instrument of Government; in the Church only an aid to police. It is clear that the Catholic Church presented herself to him as the most considerable fact in the world's history. Her incommunicable attributes of unity, sanctity, universality; the perfection of the hierarchical organization which centres round and culminates in the Apostolic throne; the sublimity of her ritual, "affecting the imagination through the senses, and the emotions through the imagination;" the marvellous adaptation of her doctrines to the needs of human nature;[2] her safeguards for innocence, her remedies for sin, the celestial light and fragrance which she diffuses around her as she moves through the centuries with majestic steps that tell of her divine origin, fascinate and overcome him. She is, for him, "la grande république des âmes;

[1] *Avant-Propos: Œuvres*, vol. i. 7.

[2] "Depuis le fétichisme informe des sauvages jusqu'aux gracieuses inventions de la Grèce jusqu'aux profondes et ingénieuses doctrines de l'Égypte et des Indes, traduites par des cultes riants ou terribles, il y a une conviction dans l'homme, celle de sa chute, de son péché, d'où vient partout l'idée des sacrifices et du rachat. . . . . Tout est rachetable; le catholicisme est dans cette parole: de là ses adorables sacraments, qui aident au triomphe de la grâce et soutiennent le pécheur."—*Le Curé de Village: Œuvres*, vol. xiv. p. 116.

Digitized by Google

la seule Église qui a mis l'humanité dans sa voie;"[1] and it is manifest, from many passages, both in his novels and in his correspondence, that he had profoundly studied her system and her doctrines. Thus, he writes, in one place, "Il n'y a que ceux qui voient Dieu qui l'aiment. Mais d'ailleurs en quoi se fondent les croyances religieuses? Sur le sentiment de l'infini qui est en nous, qui nous prouve une autre nature, qui nous mène par une déduction sévère à la religion, a l'espoir."[2] It would be difficult to state the case better. The whole doctrine of Pascal is there in germ.

Still it seems neither temerarious nor uncharitable to assert that Balzac's apprehension of Catholicism was rather notional than real. It attracts, it subdues him as a consummate work of art, as a profound system of policy, as a vast engine of moral power. But this is very different from the spiritual discernment, the personal apprehension of religious faith. The *Comédie Humaine* itself, not to go further, supplies only too strong evidence upon this matter. A plausible answer might, indeed, be made to the charge of immorality sometimes brought against it; a charge much like that urged by Rousseau against Molière's plays of being "une école de vices et de mauvais mœurs." It is a saying, as true as it is hackneyed, that a nice man is a man of nasty ideas. And Jean-Jacques, the purist, has probably done more to debauch the popular mind of France than

[1] *Le Curé de Village: Œuvres*, vol. xiv. p. 185.
[2] *Correspondance: Œuvres*, vol. xxiv. p. 251.

Digitized by Google

all the French playwrights put together; nay, than any of his fellow-leaders in that "progressive movement," one main feature of which was uncompromising opposition to the virtue of purity.[1] The *Comédie Humaine*, like the plays of Molière, is a picture of the manners of the age; and if Balzac's picture is worse than Molière's, it is because Balzac's age was worse than Molière's. In the seventeenth century, religion, with its sacred sanctions, dominated the public order: society, as a whole, believed, whatever the shortcomings of individual practice. In the nineteenth all this is changed. Then, as Sainte-Beuve has happily said, "le fond était de foi;" now, "le fond est de doute." But it is quite certain that Balzac lends no charms to vice, and supplies no irritants to sensual passion. Indeed, this seems to be pretty generally allowed by his censors. The gist of the complaint against him is, not that he is the minister of impurity—that would be a small offence, or no offence at all, in the eyes of some of his severest judges—but that he presents a terrible picture of human nature, and preaches a despairing pessimism. To this his answer is, in effect, that of Martin, in *Candide:* "C'est que j'ai vécu." He urges that he is "as moral as experience,"—and that he did not write "virginibus puerisque," but for men. And it may be forcibly contended that it was well to put a picture of man and society, in its unvarnished truth, before an age which is summoned to embrace the religion of humanity. In such an

[1] See page 153.

Digitized by Google

age, deafened with assertions of "the dignity of man as a rational being, apart from theological determinations," Balzac holds up the mirror to nature, and exhibits no abstractions, no *individua vaga*, but the men and women of the concrete world, in all their littleness, their turpitude, their radical corruption. It is the loudest sermon *De Contemptu Mundi* ever preached, and its great force lies in this—that the preacher is not declaiming from some worm-eaten homily, but passionlessly unfolding the great book of contemporary life. Still it is difficult to suppose that any man who had personally felt the power of a religion, the main notes of which are purity and charity, could have written the *Comédie Humaine*. To depict good and evil without predilection or repugnance or moral end, to behold humanity as it lies in its misery, naked and wounded and full of sores, and to survey it scientifically, probing its wounds, sounding its ulcers, removing every shred of rag or fragment of plaister which hides its foulness and dishonour, coldly and unmoved, with no tear of pity, no word of compassion—this would be impossible for such a man, for his position is not that of a mere spectator in the world: he has a task to accomplish in it as a fellow-worker with the Great Physician.

The truth would seem to be that, in Balzac, for religious faith we find sentimentality, and in this he is the true exponent of his age. It is observed by Heine, with his usual keen incisiveness, "The French cannot be false to their education. They are all

Digitized by Google

more or less materialists, according as they have received, for a longer or shorter term, the education based upon the materialistic philosophy which is imparted in France. . . . . Sentimentality is a product of materialism. The materialist carries in his soul the vague consciousness that all in this world is not matter. It is of no use for his limited understanding to show him the material character of everything; his soul instinctively rises up in rebellion. He is from time to time tormented by the necessity of recognizing in things a purely spiritual origin, and these desires, these vague wants, produce the vague effect which we call sentimentality. Sentimentality is the despair of matter, which, not being able to suffice for itself, dreams with undecided and undefined longing of a better sphere."[1] The true account of Balzac would appear to be indicated in these words, which might be strikingly illustrated by the theories of the nature of man and of the unseen world broached by him from time to time. Thus, in the *Peau de Chagrin* thought is said to be a material form like vapour, a fluid mass of which man directs the projection at pleasure; and in it, as we read in *César Birotteau*, electricity plays a great part. Elsewhere he speaks of ideas as completely organized beings which live in the invisible world and influence our destinies, and he refers miracles to animal magnetism. At one time he was greatly fascinated by Swedenborg, and *Séraphita* is little more than an exposition of certain doctrines

[1] *De la France*, p. 270.

Digitized by Google

borrowed from that great mystic. At another he appears to have been under the influence of a kind of Pantheism which mingles all the existences and phenomena of nature in a vague and confused unity, and makes an end of all personality, human and divine. And in his Introduction he gives a sketch of what may be called, in Diderot's phrase, "a system of Platonico-Pythagorico-Peripatetico-Paracelsico Christianity," essaying to effect a compromise between the naturalists and the mystics, between the spirit of Buffon and the spirit of St. Martin.

I am far from denying that in these speculations this great genius may have been dimly prescient of that idealistic Monism to which a widely influential school of European thought has, of late years, been slowly but surely tending. But I am here concerned with them as showing how deeply he had drunk into the spirit of the age. As the *Divine Comedy* is informed by the philosophy of the medieval school, so majestic in its universal congruity, so the *Comédie Humaine* reflects the chaos of opinions distracting the times in which it was written. In this, as in other respects, it is the true expression of the society in which its author lived. Mere fragment as it is of his vast design, it fulfils his purpose and possesses the character which he claimed for it. It is a great treasure-house of documents, which no student of the history of our age can afford to neglect, upon a phase of modern civilization. The chief note of that civilization, as Heine has pointed out in the passage which I have cited from him, is

Digitized by Google

the absence from it of faith; and if there is any lesson more emphatically taught than another by the history of man it is this, that faith of some sort, be it religious, political, or philosophical, is as necessary to his moral being as air to his physical organism—a faith shared by others, and forming a spiritual atmosphere. It was the work of the eighteenth century to dry up the sources of faith alike in its divine and human expressions. The French Revolution, the inevitable result of Bourbon Cæsarism and the sensualistic philosophy—which were the manifestations in different spheres of the great Renaissance idea of Materialism—was the outward visible sign of the overthrow of the principles upon which the old order had rested. It was then that Napoleon arose to proclaim, amid the roar of his victorious cannon, the new gospel that force was the measure of truth, success the test of right, and personal interest the law of action. The teaching was greedily drunk in by the generation into which Balzac was born. And we have the outcome of it in the civilization which found in him "its most original, most appropriate, and most penetrating historian."[1]

[1] *Ste. Beuve: Causeries du Lundi*, vol. ii. p. 443.

Digitized by Google

INDEX.

À priori method in politics, the, ii. 200
Mirabeau on, ii. 234
Absolutism, the ethos of, i. 185; ii. 192
the political system of the Renaissance, i. 269
progress of, in the sixteenth century, ii. 72-3
Adam of St. Victor, his hymns, i. 218-224
Agnes, St., fascination of her story, i. 220-223, 248
Albigenses, incident in the crusade against the, i. 19
Allegorical method, the, i. 226-228
Alms, the Christian view of, i. 96
Ambrose, St., on the episcopal ring, i. 160
his hymns, i. 210
Ampère, on the rise of modern poetical forms, i. 211
Anathema, the bond of, i. 168
Angelo, Michael. *See* Michael Angelo.
Animalism, ferocious, the issue of the sensualistic philosophy, ii. 159
Animals, the lower, test of progress in, i. 16
Apologists for Christianity in the eighteenth century, ii. 148, 182-5
Aquinas, St. Thomas, on the chief object of the civil ruler, i. 93
the source of his intellectual light, i. 96
on civil authority, i. 183
his poetry, i. 216
on innate knowledge of first principles, ii. 125
on the *raison d'être* of government, ii. 205, 207
on law, ii. 206
on popular rights, ii. 206-7
Architecture, medieval, its characteristics, i. 282-3
Renaissance, its characteristics, i. 283-4
Aristotle, his μεγαλόψυχος, i. 80
holds man to be ζῶον πολιτικόν, ii. 216
on demagogues and despotism, ii. 223
on the fruits of political equality, ii. 225
on scientific conceptions, ii. 306
Art, medieval, its ideal, i. 96; ii. 12
its development, i. 288
its supreme products, i. 289
Renaissance, i, 289-90
Alfred de Musset on, ii. 2
its cause one with that of liberty, ii. 41
conditions of sane criticism of, ii. 43
Christian, laws of, not inconsistent with the use of Pagan allegories and the employment of the nude, ii. 62
Articles, the Four, ii. 80, 140, 193
Artists, medieval, the spirit in which they worked, i. 248
Astronomers lift the veil of ages, i. 4
Atheism, the issue of the Renaissance philosophy, ii. 130, 153, 321
Athens, ancient, the democracy of, ii. 197
Augustine, St., his philosophy of history, i. 8, 11, 23, 27, 87

Digitized by Google

Augustine., St., on the end of man, i. 26
a representative man, i. 65
sketch of his life, i. 65-67
sketch of his times, i. 68-71
his spiritual history, i. 71-79
on the life of the senses, i. 81
parallel between his doctrine and Gautama's, i. 82
recognizes Roman jurisprudence as a divine creation, i. 88
on the natural equality of men, i. 184
on the cult of Saints, i. 243
on the two principles for the guidance of life, i. 245
on the ascent of the mind to *That which Is*, ii. 50
on the revelation of beauty, ii. 51
his scientific discipline obtained from Platonism, ii. 53
on man's natural freedom, ii. 212
on the general pact of society, ii. 216

Bacon, Lord, incorrectness of popular notion concerning, i. 297
Bacon, Roger, on the unity of the sciences, i. 292
is the pioneer of modern invention and discovery, i. 298; ii. 61
Balzac, Honoré de, his place in French literature, ii. 248-254
his object in the *Comédie Humaine*, ii. 259-60, 314
his work of social portraiture, ii. 256, 259, 301, 314, 325, 328
on artistic reality, ii. 305
his political views, ii. 315-320
his religious views, ii. 320-323
his alleged immorality, ii. 323-325
his philosophy, ii. 326-7
his claims as a historian, ii. 328
Baris, the, ii. 213
Beau monde, the, life philosophy of, ii. 269-272
Bible, the, deeply studied by Michael Angelo, ii. 21, 25
Bill of Rights, the, ii. 164
Biran, Maine de, on the distinctive characteristic of Christian philosophy, i. 84
on Voltaire's notes on Pascal, ii. 132
on the religious sentiment, ii. 152
on the sovereignty of the people, ii. 241
Bishops, the Seven, effect of the trial of, ii. 194
Boccaccio, in what sense liberty can be claimed for him, i. 274
Boethius, his influence on medieval thought, ii. 53
Bolingbroke, ii. 179, 182
Bossuet, his philosophy of history, i. 8, 11
Bowden, Mr., his *Life and Pontificate of Gregory VII.*, i. 105
on lay investiture, i. 159-161
Brentano, Dr., on medieval guilds, i. 93
Bryce, Professor, on lay investiture, i. 157
Buckle, his philosophy of history, i. 7
his defects, i. 8
on the Jews, i. 12
on the abolition of the Jesuits, ii. 104
on the despotism of Charles III., ii. 115
his method unscientific, ii. 116
Bunsen, his philosophy of history, i. 7
Burke, on the condition of Europe towards the end of the last century, i. 270, 271
on the English Freethinkers of the Eighteenth Century, ii. 181-2
on the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, ii. 234, 247
Butler, Bishop, on the law of Virtue, i. 28
on Conscience, i. 46
a heroic figure, ii. 183
Butler, Mr. Samuel, on personal identity, i. 33

Cabinet Government, institution of, ii. 165
Cæsarism, is unchristian, i. 95
a new Protestant, i. 185
See Absolutism.
Canon Law, the, i. 195
Canossa, i. 173-176

Digitized by Google

Carlyle, Mr., on great men, i. 36, 41
versus Mr. Herbert Spencer, i. 4
his conception of God, i. 46
his doctrine of great men defective, i. 46
on Goethe, i. 47
on poetry, i. 272
on Joseph II., ii. 119
on religion, ii. 150
Carmen irrisorium, a specimen of a medieval, i. 228
Categorical Imperative, the, i. 28, 47
Catholics, English, legislation concerning, in the eighteenth century, ii. 170-2
British hatred of, not unreasonable, ii. 173
Celibacy, sacerdotal, a necessary element in Catholicism, i. 150
Cenci, his plot, i. 162-166
Charles the Great, his polity, i. 112
his coronation, i. 199
Chasles, M., on Balzac, ii. 253
Chemists lift the veil of ages, i. 4
Christendom, its law, i. 92
its superiority to previous social organizations, i. 95
the source of its greatness, i. 96
its growth, i. 117
its condition in 1048, i. 125
its dissolution, ii. 70-1
Christianity, a doctrine of progress, i. 25
its importance in the annals of mankind, i. 49
its geographical limits in the first three centuries, i. 64
was a calling out of the world and into a spiritual polity, i. 85
its view of political power, i. 95
its view of property, i. 95
its central idea, i. 96
the greatest democratic movement, i. 97
recasts the Theistic conception of the Hebrews, i. 241
a travesty of, i. 295
the best pledge of liberty, ii. 191
Christian Revolution, the, its extent, i. 49, 50
its great underlying idea, i. 59
its work on the individual, i. 65-84
its work on society, i. 85-97; ii. 320
Church, the Christian, what *made* it, i. 55
is the expanded Gospel, i. 60
its organization, i. 60, 61, 86
supplies correctives to the evils of feudality, i. 117
its constitution still largely democratic in the eleventh century, i. 118
its liberty in exact proportion to the general liberties, i. 184
its hymns supply an important chapter in European history, i. 197
is an empire and a philosophy, ii. 69
forms Christendom, ii. 69-70
turned into an instrument of despotism, ii. 73
degradation of, in the eighteenth century, ii. 96, 121
is the most considerable fact in the world's history, ii. 322
Balzac's view of, ii. 320
Church, the Gallican, its ancient popularity, ii. 140
its degradation from the time of Louis XIV., ii. 140-1, 144-149
Church, the Greek, its total loss of freedom, i. 183
Cicero on Comedy, ii. 307
Cimabue, the problem solved by him, i. 288
Circumstances, the force of, another name for eternal law, i. 28
City of God, St. Augustine's, i. 11, 23, 87-89
Civilization, its elements, i. 27
progressive and conservative principle of, i. 30
meanings of the word, i. 95
materialist conception of, i. 189
Clement VII., Pope, and Michael Angelo, ii. 29, 31
Clement XIII., Pope, treatment of, by Bourbon Princes, ii. 110
his vindication of the Society of Jesus, ii. 111
Clootz, Anacharsis, on God, ii. 233
Cobden, Mr., his "calico millennium," i. 25
Coleridge, S. T., on the rightful lawgiver, ii. 206

Digitized by Google

Colonna, Victoria. *See* Victoria Colonna.
Comédie Humaine, the, object of, ii. 259
Scènes of, ii. 259-60
best introduction to, ii. 263-281
its picture of Paris, ii. 283-288
of the provinces, ii. 288-293
of country life, ii. 294-301
its truth, ii. 301-314
its meaning, ii. 314-328
Comte, his philosophy of history, i. 7
on Protestantism, ii. 130
Concubinage, how viewed in St. Augustine's time, i. 66
Concubines of priests, their position in the Middle Ages, i. 126, 153
Concupiscence installed by the French in the place of Conscience, i. 29
what the word means, i. 82
Condillac, his development of Locke's method, ii. 127
Condivi, on Michael Angelo's boyhood, ii. 9
on Michael Angelo's father, ii. 10
on Michael Angelo's life in the palace of Lorenzo de' Medici, ii. 13
on Michael Angelo's religiousness, ii. 21, 24
on the stainlessness of Michael Angelo's youth, ii. 26
on Michael Angelo's Medicean statues, ii. 35
on Michael Angelo's love of beauty, ii. 50
Confessions, St. Augustine's, importance of, i. 68
Conscience, supremacy of, proclaimed by Christianity, i. 18
to bear witness to it, the *raison d'être* of the sacerdotal order, i. 186
liberty of. *See* Liberty.
Consciousness, the ultimate court of appeal, i. 34
Constituent Assembly, the, its method, ii. 200
Constitutional Government, securities of, in England, ii. 164
Contrat Social, Rousseau's, ii. 208-9, 212, 226-7
Coulanges, Fustel de, his *Cité Antique* referred to, i. 29
Damiani, St. Peter, sent to reform the Church of Milan, i. 146
on clerical marriage, i. 154
his poetical compositions, i. 224-226
Dante, the source of his inspiration, i. 96
on St. Gregory VII., i. 128
the cause of his intensity, i. 272
his influence on Michael Angelo, ii. 15, 25, 38, 45, 53
his philosophy, ii. 53, 327
Death, Michael Angelo on the thought of, ii. 55, 56
Declaration of Right, the English, ii. 163
Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen, the, ii. 201-3
immediate results of, ii. 203-4
good and evil in, ii. 205-7
main propositions upon which it hangs, ii. 208
highly esteemed by the Jacobins, ii. 210
Deity, progress in the idea of, i. 19.
Democracy, tradition of, kept alive by Christianity, i. 92
old and new meanings of the word, ii. 197
English, ii. 237
Deposing Power, the, i. 191-193
Dictatus Papæ, i. 103
Dies Iræ, the, i. 216; ii. 45-6
Discourse on Universal History, Bossuet's, i. 11
Divine Comedy, the, source of its power, ii. 253
Divine Right, the doctrine of, ii. 79
taught by the Anglican clergy, ii. 86
Louis XV.'s assertion of, ii. 94
Droysen, Professor, on Innocent XI.'s approval of the English Revolution, ii. 87
Dryden, estimate of, i. 279
Earth, the, what it is, i. 4
not the centre of the universe, i. 6
Eighteenth Century, the, difficulty of impartially judging it, ii. 67

Digitized by Google

the closing years of a period in European history, ii. 69
the *Siècle Français*, ii. 90
political progress of Continental Europe during, ii. 90-121
philosophical progress of Continental Europe during, ii. 121-160
political and spiritual condition of England during, ii. 161-195
Eliot, George, her picture of fifteenth century Florence, ii. 9
on liberty, ii. 206
on "the working men," ii. 222
Empire, the Roman, antagonism between it and Christianity, i. 59, 62, 111
England, constitutional liberties of, secured in the thirteenth century, i. 266
eclipsed under Henry VII., i. 266
condition of, at the outbreak of the French Revolution, i. 271
under Elizabeth, ii. 72
liberties of, saved by William III., ii. 86-88
growth of civil and religious liberty in, during the eighteenth century, ii. 161-176
influence of family and fortune in, ii. 245
Ennui, the eighteenth century steeped in, ii. 158
Enthusiasm, i. 194
Epicurus, his influence on the popular religion, i. 240, 249
Equality, natural, i. 40, 184
Rousseau's theory of, false, ii. 213
absolute, impossible, ii. 223
of rights, ought to result in equality of fact, ii. 228
Erasmus, historical value of his writings, i. 295
their practical effect, ii. 71
Eskimo, the, ii. 213
Ethics, primary truths of, i. 11
root of, i. 15
evolution of, i. 16
source of authority of, i. 17
vivified by religion, i. 18
work of Christianity in the sphere of, i. 18
Être Suprême, the, proclaimed by Rousseau, ii. 136
his existence decreed by the National Convention, ii. 233
his *Fête*, ii. 233
Europe, periods in the history of, i. 98, 259; ii. 60
political condition of, as the eleventh century opens, i. 107-110
condition of, at the time of the *Revival of Letters*, i. 261; ii. 16-18
political condition of, in the eighteenth century, i. 270-2; ii. 94-121
history of, since 1788, ii. 196
Evolution, the universal law, i. 13, 14, 125
Excommunication, civil effects of, i. 168

Facts, English respect for, ii. 199, 211
of History, few and fragmentary, i. 2
general, stand out clearly, i. 3
what philosophy is to be their outcome, i. 7
Faith, medieval, i. 172, 234
what it rests on, i. 252
necessary to man's moral being, ii. 328
Family, the, was the unit of ancient society, i. 91
work of Christianity on, i. 91
Fatalism, the key to ancient religion and philosophy, i. 238
Fauchet, the Abbé, ii. 229, 231
Fénelon, his "affaire unique," i. 76
a prophetic utterance of, i. 269
Ferrerius, Zacharias, his nova politissimaque carmina, i. 231
Feudalism, rise of, i. 113
its character, i. 114-117
invades the Church, i. 121-127, 145
Fictions, useful and pernicious, ii. 218-220
Florence in Michael Angelo's youth, ii. 8, 18
extinction of her liberties, ii. 29
democracy in, ii. 198
Fox, Charles James, on general freedom of speech and writing, ii. 168

Digitized by Google

Fra Angelico in verse, i. 229
France, present degeneration of, i. 30, 187
rise and decay of liberty in, i. 267; ii. 78
condition of, at the outbreak of the Revolution of 1789, i. 270
condition of, when Louis XIV. began to reign, ii. 76-78
sources of her influence in Europe, ii. 196
the "great wound" of, ii. 318
extinction of public spirit in, ii. 320
Fraternity, shibboleth of, put in circulation, ii. 229
as practised by the Jacobins, ii. 230-1
origin of, ii. 231
Catholic doctrine of, ii. 232
Freeman, Professor, his *Historical Geography of Europe*, value of, i. 108
on the "Revival of Learning," i. 255
on the decay of Italian liberty, i. 265
on nationality, ii. 239
on the growth of English liberty, ii. 246
Fulbert of Chartres, St., on warrior prelates, i. 126

Gautama, parallel between his doctrine and St. Augustine's, i. 82
Gautier, Théophile, on the uses of the novel, ii. 257
on Balzac, ii. 314
Geology, revelations of, i. 4
George, Mr. Henry, his *Progress and Poverty* referred to, i. 21
George III., his struggles to increase his prerogative, ii. 162
Germany, decay and extinction of liberty in, i. 268
condition of, at the outbreak of the French Revolution, i. 270
Gförer, his *Papst Gregorius VII.*, i. 102
Ghirlandaio, Domenico, his merits, ii. 11
Gibbon, ii. 179
Giesebrecht, his *Geschichte der Deutschen Kaiserzeit*, i. 102
God, popular conceptions of, i. 19
what the word implies, i. 26, 236
idea of, the progressive and conservative principle of civilization, i. 31
Mr. Carlyle's conception of, i. 46

Hall, Sir Matthew, his *Primitive Origination of Mankind*, ii. 125
Hallam, Mr., on Tasso and Ariosto, i. 276
on Dryden, i. 279
on guarantees of English constitutional freedom, ii. 164
on the *Bill of Rights*, ii. 192
Happiness, Benthamite sense of, i. 21
Hartmann, Von, on progress, i. 26
Hausset, Madame du, on the corruption of manners under the Regency, ii. 142
a scene from her *Mémoires*, ii. 146
Hegel, his philosophy of history, i. 7
Heine on the Renaissance, ii. 64
on Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ii. 74
on the opportuneness of Shakespeare's appearance, i. 277; ii. 255
his testimony to the character of the age of Balzac, ii. 309-312
on French sentimentality, ii. 326
Henry IV., Emperor-Elect, his pretensions not new, i. 157
his simony, i. 159, 162
his plot to seize Gregory VII., i. 162
throws off the mask, i. 167
at Canossa, i. 174
his invasion of the Pontifical territory, i. 178
his coronation by the anti-pope Guibert, i. 180
Hergenröther, Cardinal, on tributary and vassal kingdoms of the Holy See, i. 193
on the degradation of the Catholic Church in the eighteenth century, ii. 96
Hilary, St., his hymns, i. 211
Hildebrand. *See* Gregory VII.
History, how viewed by Goethe, i. 1
by Napoleon, i. 3

Digitized by Google

materials for the philosophy of, i. 3
unconscious, value of, i. 3
brings us to the noumenal, i. 5
philosophies of, i. 7
facts of, taken by themselves, what they point to, i. 11
teaches progress, i. 25, 26
can be philosophically studied only through great men, ii. 3
History of Europe. *See* European History.
"Holy Ghost," vague use of the term in the early Church, i. 61
Hooker, on the immortality of nations, ii. 239
House of Commons, the unreformed, Pitt on, ii. 165
Mr. Gladstone on, ii. 166
Hulks, the, life philosophy of, ii. 272-4
Humanity. *See* Man.
Hume, ii. 179
Hymns, medieval, collections and translations of, i. 200-202

Imperfection, moral, the sense of, a fact of human nature, ii. 214, 322
Individual, the, evolution of, i. 15
sovereignty of the, M. Renan upon, i. 35
recreated by Christianity, i. 91
Jacobin doctrine of the sovereignty of, ii. 208-210, 212, 220
effaced by Jacobinism, ii. 228
sovereignty of, not in credit in England, ii. 236
Inferno, Dante's, materials for, i. 21
Innocent XI., Pope, on the Gallican Bishops, ii. 81
blames the arbitrary measures of James II., ii. 87
sympathizes with and supports William III., ii. 87
Inquisition, the, i. 19, 20, 270; ii. 73, 217
Investiture, lay, the question of, i. 157-161, 182
Ireland, heavy penalty still due for English oppression of, i. 35
condition of, in the eighteenth century, ii. 174-6
Isidore, the pseudo-, i. 120
Italy, condition of, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, i. 263
decay and extinction of liberty in, i. 265
condition of, on the eve of the French Revolution, ii. 117

Jaffé, his *Regesta Pontificum*, and *Monumenta Gregoriana*, i. 102
James II., his character and achievements, ii. 86-7, 173
Jesus Christ, a unique teacher, i. 51
what is incontestable about Him, i. 51, 52
uncontroverted evidence as to His teaching, i. 52
essential character of His teaching, i. 53-56
the spread of Christianity His personal victory, i. 56-59
is the supreme example of detachment, i. 83
His life a system of moral discipline, i. 84
Jesus, Society of, its foundation and progress, ii. 98-101
true significance of its suppression, ii. 101-112
Joseph II., his character and "reforms," ii. 117-120
Judges, the English, their independence, ii. 165
Julius II., Pope, and Michael Angelo, ii. 28, 34
Jurisprudence, English, amelioration of, in the eighteenth century, ii. 165
Justice, definition of, i. 16
the end of government, i. 257

Kant, his philosophy of history, i. 7
on the source of ethical obligation, i. 17
his message to the nineteenth century, i. 47
on the development of man, ii. 218
Karma, i. 99
Knowledge, limits of our, i. 5, 6

Laboulaye, M., on liberty and property, ii. 218

Digitized by Google

Lamartine, on Balzac, ii. 250
Lamennais, Félix de, his testimony as to the character of the Age of Balzac, ii. 312, 313
on liberty in France, ii. 318
Lanfranc, Archbishop, on Papal Acts, i. 148
Latin "low," i. 205
Lecky, Mr., on the civil consequences of excommunication, i. 168
on the Schism Act, ii. 162
on the position of English Catholics in the eighteenth century, ii. 170-1, 174
Lee, Mr., his *History of Clerical Celibacy*, estimate of, i. 150
Leibnitz, on the universal order, i. 14
Leo IX., St., his elevation to the Popedom, i. 132
his attachment to Hildebrand, i. 133
description of, i. 134
Leo X. and Michael Angelo, ii. 28
Lessing, his view of the only true historian, ii. 302
Liberties, the Gallican, ii. 80, 92, 140
Liberty, Bossuet's account of, i. 114
the foundation of modern, i. 184
of Conscience, the principle for which Gregory VII. fought, i. 185
preciousness of, i. 256
definitions of, i. 257; ii. 206
Milton's account of, 257
what it is in the intellectual province, i. 258
political, not to be confounded with its guarantees and instruments, ii. 166
what is essential to it, ii. 166-7
of the Press, i. 185; ii. 167-8
religious, progress of, in England in the eighteenth century, ii. 169-174
in Ireland, ii. 175-6
the natural, of man, ii. 212
and property, ii. 218
Rivarol on the French conception of, ii. 224
M. Gambetta on, ii. 224
Mirabeau on, ii. 234
in France, ii. 318
Life, Pagan and Christian views of, i. 244-246
Littré, his philosophy of history, i. 7
on the greatness of the medieval period, i. 94
his definition of Positivism, i. 113
on the word "Renaissance," i. 299; ii. 63
Livings, traffic in, in the eleventh century, i. 127, 159
Locke, John, importance of his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ii. 75, 122-3
account of, by Mr. Mill, ii. 123
by d'Alembert, ii. 123
Voltaire's eulogy of, ii. 123
his teaching, ii. 124-126
development of his doctrine, ii. 126-128
repudiates his own spiritual offspring, ii. 178
the father of such as make evidences, ii. 182
on intellectual inequality among men, ii. 214
Louis XIV., condition of France when he began to govern, ii. 77
the main lines of his administration, ii. 78
converts the monarchy into a theocratic institution, ii. 79
his treatment of Popes, ii. 80, 81
his religious zeal, ii. 81
is the incarnation of Renaissance Cæsarism, ii. 82
intoxicated by his success, ii. 84
his devastation of the Palatinate, ii. 85
in what sense "Great," ii. 85
his monarchy shaken to its foundations by William III., ii. 88
the supreme manifestation of his egotism, ii. 90
his testament annulled, ii. 90
exhaustion of France by his reign, ii. 92
corrupting effect of his court, ii. 138
disastrous results of his religious policy, ii. 139-41

Digitized by Google

Louis XV., his reign, ii. 92-4
on the quarrels of the Clergy and Parliaments, ii. 146
Louis XVI., his insufficiency, ii. 112
Love, the passion of, work of Christianity on, i. 92
work of the *philosophes* on, ii. 156-7

Mabillon on the Popes of the tenth century, i. 122
Macaulay, Lord, on Florence in the fourteenth century, i. 263
on France at the beginning of Louis XIV.'s reign, ii. 77
on the *Divine Comedy*, ii. 253
Macrocosm, the, must be judged in the light of the microcosm, i. 11
Maine, Sir Henry, on the feudal system, i. 115
on legal fictions, ii. 218-19
Man, his supposed royalty, i. 4
his nothingness, i. 5
seeks himself everywhere, i. 8
his progress, i. 15, 22
primeval, i. 31.
his trial, i. 37
his rights, i. 257; ii. 235
his real character, ii. 214-15, 221-223
Man, the, and the Citizen, Declaration of the Rights of. See *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen.*
Maria Theresa, on the partition of Poland, ii. 118
Marriage, its place in Christianity, i. 91
the basis of the social order reared by Christianity, ii. 153
how affected by the sensualistic philosophy, ii. 154, 157
Masses, the, position of, in the ancient world, i. 71
George Eliot's account of, ii. 222
Matilda, the Great Countess, i. 171
May, Sir Erskine, on the struggles of George III. to increase his prerogative, ii. 162
on reform in England, ii. 239, 24(
Merivale, Dean, on the degradatio of woman in the ancient world. i. 91
Methodism, debt of England to, ii. 195
Michael Angelo, the greatest name among artists, ii. 1
what is left us of him, ii. 3, 4
periods in the life of, ii. 6
his youth, ii. 7-27
his ignorance of Latin, ii. 9, 10
his father Ludovico, ii. 10
his ancestry, ii. 11
is apprenticed to the Ghirlandii, ii. 11
his first studies of medieval art, ii. 12
his early studies of the antique, ii. 13
influence of Dante and Savonarola on, ii. 15-19
his first works, ii. 20-25
his way of life, ii. 25-27, 39
his manhood, ii. 27-41
beginning of the "tragedy of the sepulchre," ii. 28
appointed Commissary-General of the Fortifications of Florence, ii. 29
in danger from Medicean assassins, ii. 30
is nominated chief architect to the Apostolic Chamber, ii. 31
his Bruges Madonna, ii. 32
his David, ii. 33
his Captives, ii. 33-4
his difficulties with Pope Julius, ii. 34
his Moses, ii. 35
his statues in the Medicean Chapel, ii. 35-6
his Sistine frescoes, ii. 37-9
his Leda, ii. 41
his friendship with Victoria Colonna, ii. 42
his Last Judgment, ii. 43-46
his Pauline frescoes, ii. 47
appointed architect of St. Peter's, ii. 47
his work on the Viminal, ii. 47
his Sonnets, ii. 49-58
his death, ii. 58
his position in respect of the Renaissance, ii. 59-66
analogy between him and Balzac, ii. 252

Digitized by Google

Michelet, his explanation of the word Renaissance, i. 254
Middle Ages, the, root of their true greatness, i. 94
duration of, i. 98
sources of, i. 234
lived on, in the popular mind, in the time of Shakspeare, i. 277
Mignet, M., his *La Lutte des Papes contre les Empereurs d'Allemagne*, i. 102
on Papal elections, i. 138
Mill, Mr. J. S., on civilization, i. 95
on the brutality of man, ii. 223
his great defect, ii. 237
Milman, Dean, his *Latin Christianity*, i. 105
certain errors of, corrected, i. 152
Milton, his view of freedom, i. 257
his conception of a Christian commonwealth, i. 264
belongs to the Renaissance only in a limited sense, i. 278
on the natural religiousness of Englishmen, ii. 192
Mirabeau, the Marquis de, on the analogy between men and rabbits, ii. 230
Mirabeau, on liberty, ii. 234
Montaigne, the precursor of Voltaire and Rousseau, ii. 71
Montalembert, le Comte de, his *Moines d'Occident*, i. 104
Montesquieu on English freedom, ii. 177
Morality, what it is, ii. 310. *See* Ethics.
More, Sir Thomas, historical value of his *Utopia*, i. 262
Morley, Mr. John, on Voltairism, ii. 129, 141
on Rousseauism, ii. 133-4, 152
on lubricity as an instrument of progress, ii. 154
Music, medieval, i. 291
its development in the Renaissance period, i. 291
Musset, Alfred de, on art, ii. 2
his testimony as to the character of Balzac's age, ii. 307-309
Mutiny Act, the, ii. 164
Mysticism, Christian, ii. 51
Mythology, comparative, its value, i. 3

Nantes, Revocation of the Edict of, ii. 81
Napoleon on the French *noblesse*, ii. 318
his message to the world, ii. 328
Nation, a, what it is, i. 31; ii. 239, 240
what it is not, ii. 220
Natural and Supernatural, varying senses in which the words are used, i. 43.
Natural Selection, law of, when vanquished by man, i. 15
Neale, the Rev. Dr., his literary merits, i. 201, 202
his disingenuousness, i. 203, 220
Neander on the pseudo-Isidore, i. 120
on St. Augustine's Platonism, ii. 53
Neo-Platonists, their lofty conceptions, i. 71
Newman, Cardinal, on Atheism and the physical world, i. 9
on the primitive use of the term "Holy Ghost," i. 61
on clerical marriage. i. 155
Nicæa, Council of, i. 63
sixth canon of, quoted, i. 104
Nicholas I., St., i. 120
Nicola Pisano, the impulse given by him to sculpture, i. 285, 286; ii. 61

Ochlocracy, ii. 198, 225
Odilo, St., his character, i. 129
Optimism, a wicked way of thinking, i. 21
opposed to the facts of human nature, ii. 214, 221
Original compact, the, ii. 199
Orléans, Duke of, his policy as Regent, ii. 91
Ozanam, on progress, i. 187, 189
on medieval Latin, i. 205

Paganism, ancient, its highest ideal, i. 79, 240
renascent, i. 231, 275; ii. 17
its unethical character, i. 239

Digitized by Google

Painting, medieval, i. 287-9
Renaissance, i. 289-90
Papacy, development of the, i. 119, 120
its condition between the times of St. Nicholas I. and St. Gregory VII., i. 121-125
election to the, vested in the College of Cardinals, i. 138
its place in medieval Europe, i. 192
condition of, in the last thirty-five years of the fifteenth century, ii. 17
condition of, in the eighteenth century, ii. 97, 109-112, 121
Parliaments, the French, the only check upon the power of the French monarchs, ii. 92
their quarrels with the clergy, ii. 145-6
Parma, affair of the Duke of, in 1768, ii. 110
Pascal, Voltaire on, ii. 132
his prescient genius, ii. 148
is at the heart of Christianity, ii. 149
Pater, Mr., what he understands by the word Renaissance, i. 254
on the true character of Michael Angelo's art, ii. 62
on the characteristics of the Renaissance, ii. 64
Pattison, Mr. Mark, on religion in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, ii. 181
Peasantry, the French, the truth about, ii. 297-301
Peregrinus Apostolicus, ii. 121
Perkins, Mr., his summary of the history of Tuscan sculpture, i. 287
on Michael Angelo's Captives, ii. 33
Personality, what it is, i. 32
Mr. Samuel Butler on, i. 33
Schopenhauer on, i. 34
worth of, proclaimed by Christianity, i. 91
Petrarch, his chief glory, i. 274
Petronius, on the origin of gods, i. 238
Philology, comparative, its historical value, i. 3
Philosophes, the, were disciples of Locke, ii. 74, 126-8
were the confederates and flatterers of Absolutism, ii. 112-116
the substance of their teaching, ii. 137
reason of their success, ii. 137-149
their teaching issues in Atheism, ii. 149-152
and in ferocious animalism, ii. 153-159
Philosophy, medieval, its two streams, i. 65
"Baconian": its dissolvent influence, i. 249
how affected by the Renaissance, i. 296
all systems of, reducible to two classes, ii. 160
Plato, his view of religion, i. 90
Platonism, Michael Angelo's, ii. 50-55
Poetry, religious, its historical value, i. 197, 199
the test of freedom, i. 272
Pombal, his ferocious cruelties against the Jesuits, ii. 101
pretexts for them, ii. 103-4
Pope, estimate of, i. 279
Positivism, in the Middle Ages, i. 113
in the eighteenth century, ii. 151
Principles of '89, the authoritative exposition of, ii. 201-3
tested by facts, ii. 211-216
are not serviceable fictions, ii. 217-220
are fatal to liberty, ii. 220-228
and to property, ii. 229-231
do not commend themselves to Englishmen, ii. 243, 246-7
Progress, the fact of, i. 16-26
Von Hartmann on, i. 26
the law of, i. 27-30
the instruments of, i. 36-42
two doctrines of, i. 187; ii. 301
Prometheus, myth of, i. 24
Property, how viewed in Catholic theology, i. 95; ii. 231-302
M. Laboulaye on, ii. 218
the Jacobins on, ii. 226
Rousseau on, ii. 227
Protestantism, Comte on, ii. 130

Digitized by Google

Prudentius, his *Peristephanon* referred to, i. 58
some account of, i. 206, 207
extract from, i. 209
his hymn on St. Agnes quoted, i. 221
his view of human life, i. 247
Public opinion, the basis of Papal power in the Middle Ages, i. 148, 151
Purity, the virtue of, how estimated by the Jacobins, i. 80
importance attached to by Catholics, ii. 153
endeavours of the *philosophes* to root it out, ii. 153-154
how viewed in the age of Balzac, ii. 282

Quinet, Edgar, on adulterine children, i. 36

Rabelais, his scepticism, ii. 71
Ranke, on the question of lay investiture, i. 157
on the suppression of the Jesuits, ii. 103, 111
Ratherius, Bishop, on clerical marriages, i. 154
Reality, Balzac on, ii. 305
Religion, an eclectic, i. 204
in the nineteenth century, i. 250, 251
its surest foundation, i. 252
the first thing about a man, ii. 150
Rousseau on, ii. 151
Renaissance, the, its origin, i. 99
its sacred poetry, i. 231-2
the meaning generally put upon the word, i. 234-5
its effect in the public order, i. 260-272; ii. 59, 63
poets of, i. 275
literature, chief note of, i. 276
period of, in English literature, i. 278
its effect on architecture, i. 281-4
on sculpture, i. 284-7
on painting, i. 287-290
on the art of music, i. 291
on science, i. 291-9
brings scholasticism into discredit, i. 294
is a question-begging word, ii. 59
Michael Angelo's position with regard to, ii. 61
true character of the movement usually so called, ii. 63-65
is Cæsarism in the political order and Materialism in the intellectual, ii. 69
epoch, closing period of the, ii. 69
Renan, M., his philosophy of history, i. 7
on "the Great Unconscious Artist," i. 10
on the Jacobin doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, i. 35
on Jewish belief in Divine Incarnations, i. 55
on spiritual liberty, i. 81
on fanaticism, i. 196
Republics, the medieval Italian, debt of, to St. Gregory VII., i. 184
vigorous national life in, i. 263
realize Milton's idea of a free commonwealth, i. 264; ii. 197
"Revival of Letters," the, i. 294; ii. 63
Revolution, the Christian. *See* Christian Revolution.
Revolution of 1688, results of, ii. 88, 191-195
a vindication of ancient liberties, ii. 199-200
Revolution, the French, Burke's estimate of, ii. 68
Mr. Mill's estimate of, ii. 68
the greatest fact of our age, ii. 196, 199
characteristics of, ii. 243
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, on the style of Michael Angelo, ii. 2
on the grand style, ii. 43
Rhyme in poetry, use and progress of, i. 211
Rights, respect for, the test of progress, i. 16
Rivarol, on Voltaire, ii. 136
Robertson, F. W., on Pope, i. 279
Robespierre, his doctrine concerning individual property, ii. 226
pontificates at the *fête* of the *Être Suprême*, ii. 233
Romanticism, religious, i. 94
Rousseau, Voltaire on, i. 30; ii. 135

Digitized by Google

substance of his teaching, ii. 133
Mr. Morley's claims for him, ii. 133-4
his teaching effectively iconoclastic, ii. 134, 136
his egoism, ii. 135
his political theory, ii. 208-216
on Molière, ii. 323
his debauching influence, ii. 324
Ruskin, Mr., on the development of Renaissance architecture, i. 281
on the effect of Christianity upon art, i. 282
on the characteristics of medieval architecture, i. 282
on the characteristics of Renaissance architecture, i. 284
on the difference between the earlier and later schools of painting, ii. 12
on truth in art, ii. 44

Sainte-Beuve on Pascal, ii. 149
on the lubricity of the eighteenth century, ii. 153
on Balzac, ii. 249, 250, 254, 281, 328
on religion in the seventeenth century, ii. 324
Saints, Christian, not identical with pagan gods, i. 243
Sanctity, the conception of, unknown to the ancient world, i. 83
Sand, George, on the institute of the Jesuits, ii. 107
on the truth of the *Comédie Humaine*, ii. 314
Savonarola, his greatness and purity, ii. 15
his message to Florence, ii. 18
honoured in the Tuscan churches as a saint and a martyr, ii. 19
his influence on Michael Angelo, ii. 19, 21, 25, 38
Schelling, his philosophy of history, i. 7, 31
Scherer, M., on Milton, i. 278
on French life in the eighteenth century, ii. 157-8
on Methodism, ii. 195
Schiller, his philosophy of history, i. 7
on religion and religions, i. 17
Schism Act, the, ii. 162
Schlegel, his philosophy of history, i. 8
on the dissolution of Christendom, ii. 71
Schlosser on government in Continental Europe in the eighteenth century, ii. 95
on Portuguese and Spanish cruelties against the Jesuits, ii. 101, 102
on the suppression of the Society of Jesus, ii. 108-9
Schoolmen, the, their method, i. 293-4
discredited by the Renaissance, i. 294, 296
Schopenhauer on human life, i. 21
Science, "Priests of," i. 189
definition of the word, i. 292
Sciences, the intimate connection of all, i. 292
Scott, Sir Walter, on Dryden, i. 279
on the object of the *Waverley Novels*, ii. 257
Sculpture, medieval, i. 285
Renaissance, i. 286
Senses, the life of, i. 81
the eighteenth century gives free play to, ii. 156
Settlement, the Act of, ii. 163
Shaftesbury, his teaching and influence, ii. 178-9
Shakspeare belongs to the Middle Ages, i. 297; ii. 255
the best exponent of English life in the sixteenth century, ii. 255
Simony in the eleventh century, i. 127, 145
Smith, Mr. Toulmin, on medieval gilds, i. 93
Solidarity, i. 13, 14, 35
"Son of a Priest," an opprobrious epithet in the Middle Ages, i. 126
Sonnets, Michael Angelo's, Schlegel and Wordsworth on, ii. 48-9
Guasti's edition of, ii. 3, 49
Mr. Symond's translation of, ii. 49
Sovereignty, the theory of, in Imperial Rome, i. 110
Rousseau's theory of, ii. 208-9, 220-1, 241

Digitized by Google

Spain, decay of liberty in, i. 267
condition of, in the eighteenth century, i. 270; ii. 115-16
Spencer, Mr. Herbert, on good and bad results, i. 23
on the roots of social phenomena, i. 32
character of his philosophy, i. 38
on great men, i. 39
his use of the words Natural and Supernatural, i. 43
on Mr. Carlyle, i. 45
Spinoza, on Jesus Christ, i. 51
Voltaire on, ii. 131
Novalis on, ii. 131
Cousin on, ii. 131
on the end of the State, ii. 218
Stanhope, Lord, his parallel between the Age of the Georges and the Age of the Antonines, ii. 161
on the Test and Corporation Acts, ii. 169-70
State, the end of, ii. 218
omnipotence of, in the Jacobin theory, ii. 220-1
action of, in France, ii. 224
best form of the, ii. 240
Stephen, Mr. Leslie, on Locke and Toland, ii. 178
on the Warburtonians, ii. 184
Stigand, Mr., on the German Courts of the last century, i. 271
Stubbs, Bishop, on the feudal system, i. 116
Suarez, his especial glory, ii. 105
on the right of resistance to tyranny, ii. 205
Supernaturalism, various kinds of, i. 235
Superstition, medieval, i. 172
Swinburne, Mr., his preference for the antique cults, i. 17
Sybel, von, on the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, ii. 201
Symonds, Mr., his account of the Renaissance, i. 255
his view of the æsthetic Renaissance, i. 286
his translation of Michael Angelo's Sonnets, ii. 49
on the effect of the Revival of Letters, ii. 64
Taine, M., his philosophy of history, i. 7
on the feudal system, i. 114
on Wesley, ii. 190
on the procedure of the Constituent Assembly, ii. 200
on the effect of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, ii. 203-4
on the style of Balzac, ii. 251
on Balzac as a historian, ii. 281
on Balzac's immense erudition, ii. 294
on Balzac's truth, ii. 306
on Balzac's view of society, ii. 315
Tannucci, his assertion of monarchical divine right, ii. 103
Taylor, Jeremy, on the formation of Christendom, i. 92
Tertullian, on the freedom of the conscience, i. 112
Theodoret, his Νενικηκας Γαλιλαιε, i. 59
Theology, its place in the Middle Ages, i. 293
effect of the Renaissance upon, i. 296
"Old Bailey," ii. 183
Thierry, M., on the feudal system, i. 117
Thiers, his philosophy of history, i. 8
Thomas, St. *See* Aquinas.
Thought-reading, Hildebrand's power of, i. 145
Toland, his *Christianity not Mysterious*, ii. 178
Translation, an insoluble problem, i. 202
Truth, the object of the human intellect, i. 258

Unity of all natural forces, i. 13, 14
Universe, the, no data for a theory of, i. 6

Vassal kingdoms of the Holy See, i. 193
Venantius Fortunatus, some account of, i. 213-215
Victoria Colonna, her estimate of Michael Angelo, ii. 1, 6
her friendship with him, ii. 27, 42
Vie Littéraire, La, ii. 284

Digitized by Google

Villemain, M., his estimate of St. Augustine, i. 65
his *Histoire de Grégoire VII.*, i. 102-105
his account of the growth of Papal power, i. 119
on Gregory VII.'s "Radicalism," i. 183
Virgil, his doctrine of progress, i. 24
Voigt, his *Hildebrand als Papst Gregor VII.*, i. 101
Voltaire in some respects a minister of progress, i. 20
on Hildebrand, i. 100
on Rousseau, i. 30; ii. 135
his eulogy of Locke, ii. 123-4
his supreme literary excellence, ii. 128
his test of truth, ii. 129
his crusade against the *Infâme*, ii. 129
his contempt for metaphysics, ii. 130
his judgment of Spinoza, ii. 131
his notes on Pascal, ii. 132
his philosophy congruous with the spirit of the age, ii. 143
his contempt for the contemporary French clergy, ii. 148
on the English Constitution, ii. 176-7
on religion in England in 1726, ii. 186

Wesley, John, on the hymns of himself and his brother, i. 201
begins the Methodist movement, ii. 186
his greatness, ii. 187
his loyalty to the National Church, ii. 187
his appeal to the authorities of Oxford, ii. 188
his fulcrum, ii. 189
M. Taine on, ii. 190
William, Bishop of Utrecht, i. 171
William III., importance of his work for England, ii. 86, 88, 191-5
thwarted by the High Tories in his design of religious liberty, ii. 172
his offer to Irish Catholics, ii. 174-5
Wilson, Mr. Heath, his life of Michael Angelo, ii. 4
on Michael Angelo's David, ii. 33
on Michael Angelo's statue of Day, ii. 36
"Wire-pullers," what sort of men they are, ii. 221-2
Woman, work of Christianity for, i. 91; ii. 153, 159
work of Renaissance philosophy for, ii. 154-157, 159
World, the, Schopenhauer on, i. 21
what it means in the New Testament, i. 85

Zamyâd Yast, the, referred to, i. 24
Zoroaster, his doctrine of progress, i. 24

Digitized by Google

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS,
BUNGAY,
and Bread Street Hill, London.

Digitized by Google

ANCIENT RELIGION AND MODERN THOUGHT.

By WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY.

Third Edition. Price Twelve Shillings.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"We are sincerely glad to welcome a new edition of this really valuable and important work. . . . . Most interesting chapters are the third on Eastern Religions, and the fourth on Naturalism and Christianity . . . . Mr. Lilly's last chapter, on Matter and Spirit, will repay careful study, and must be carefully studied to have justice done to it."—*Saturday Review.*

"This is a book which evidences not only wide knowledge and much subtlety of thought, but a very high dialectic power. . . . . A more powerful preliminary statement of the case against the sceptical school, and especially against the school which accounts for conscience as the product of social conditions impressing themselves on the individual life, it would be difficult to find."—*Spectator.*

"In this book Mr. Lilly invites his readers to 'look in the face the issue of that great intellectual movement in the European world, which is usually termed modern thought.' . . . . No intelligent reader will fail to recognize the ability with which Mr. Lilly deals with the great problems he discusses. He has taken pains to appreciate the full significance of the arguments which can be advanced against his own position; and in answering them he manifests not only much ingenuity and resource, but intimate acquaintance with the writings of many of the most eminent philosophical writers, both of ancient and of modern times. The results of his thought and research he presents simply and gracefully; and there is nothing in the form of his statements to which the most vehement of Agnostics could object as either intolerant or unfair."—*St. James's Gazette.*

"This remarkable and original work, founded upon essays that had a wide popularity as they appeared in the leading Reviews, will be read on all sides with deep interest; and, as we cannot doubt, will influence in many ways the current of contemporary thinking. . . . . It is evidently a book for the times. It abounds

Digitized by Google

in argument and illustration that the world can comprehend; in large perspectives, out-of-the-way facts, and unlooked-for *rapprochements*. Not only in matter but in manner, it is, we think, one of the most suggestive treatises that have appeared this long while. To students, as to men of the world, it appeals with almost equal cogency, and will make its mark, be the readers who they may."—*Tablet.*

"This is an interesting and suggestive book, well written, bearing everywhere the marks of careful study and extensive reading, full of apt quotations, acute, and often brilliant criticisms. It is genial, lucid, and not seldom vivid in style, generous in tone, Catholic in spirit (in a sense better than the ecclesiastical), thoughtful in matter, yet never so burdened with thought as to be hard either to read or to understand. . . . . Many fine spiritual and philosophical qualities are apparent in this work."—*Principal Fairbairn in The Academy.*

"The work is one which deals fairly and frankly, and in no narrow or one-sided spirit, with some of the most momentous questions that can occupy human thought."—*Scotsman.*

"Those who are acquainted with Mr. Lilly's writings will not fail to recognize, with emphatic respect, the conspicuous courage and thoroughness with which he confronts the most difficult problems and the most audacious speculations of modern science and philosophy, the treasures of wide and various reading, and ample armoury of thought and learning which he brings to the controversies in which he seems to feel the delight of battle. His familiar acquaintance with the languages and literatures of the East, as well as with the transient literatures of the West, makes him a fearless and formidable antagonist for the followers of the latest fashions in philosophy. To believers and unbelievers alike his studies of ancient and modern religions and philosophies, from Buddhism to Nihilism, from Confucius and Zoroaster to Wesley and Schopenhauer, are deeply suggestive. No reader will refuse to acknowledge the brilliancy and the vigour of the argument, enriched as it is with all the resources of a most accomplished intellect. It seems an odd thing to say of a book dealing with the profoundest questions of human faith and destiny that it is easy reading; but as Byron used to say, easy reading means hard writing, and there is no mistaking the amount of laborious thought and investigation that has been spent upon these chapters."—*Daily News.*

"The book well deserves the popularity which it has attained."—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

HARVARD LAW LIBRARY

FROM THE LIBRARY
OF
RAMON DE DALMAU Y DE OLIVART
MARQUÉS DE OLIVART

RECEIVED DECEMBER 31, 1911

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google